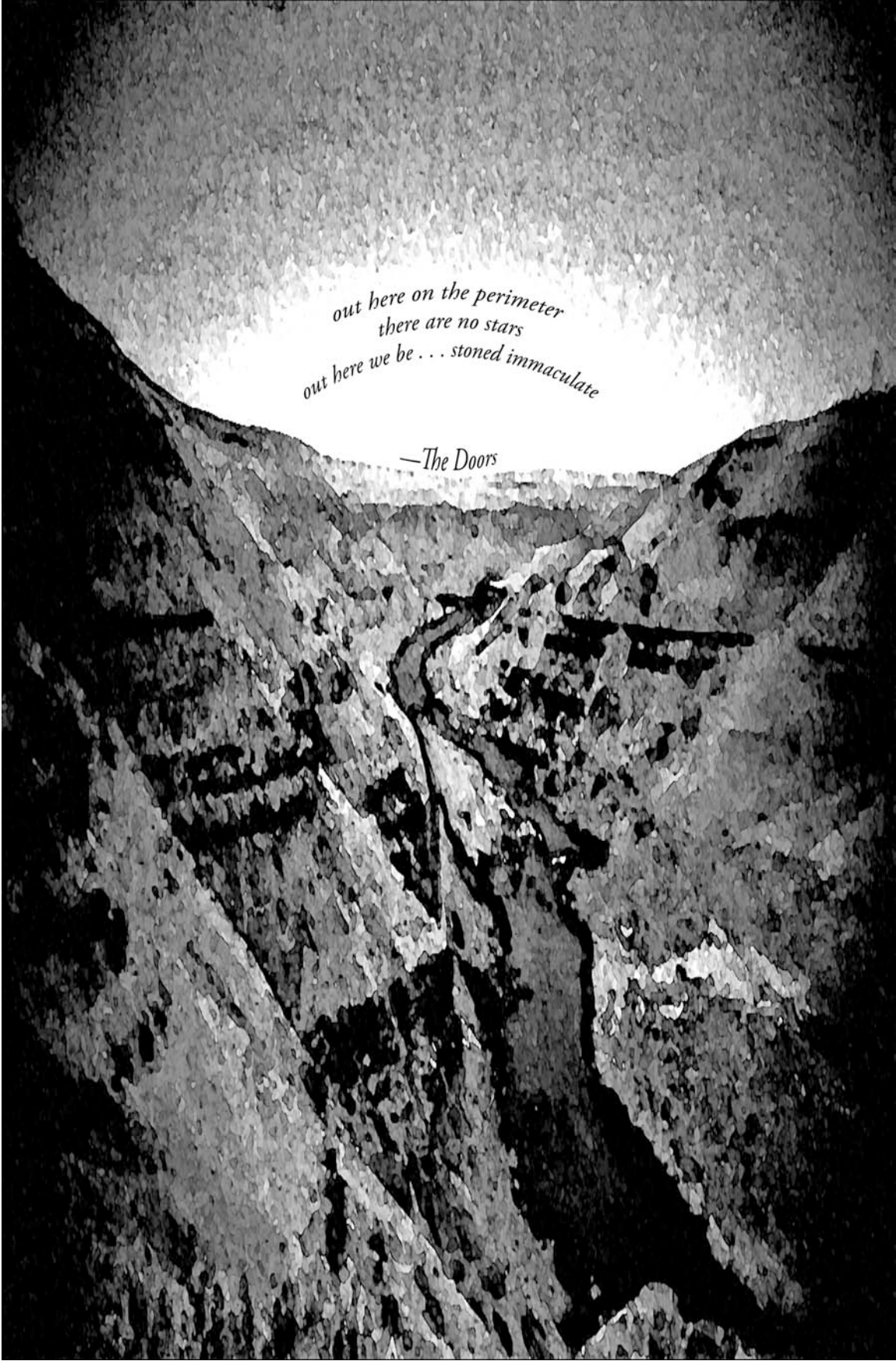


The Cenacle



Number 65 ~ June 2008



*out here on the perimeter
there are no stars
out here we be . . . stoned immaculate*

—The Doors

From Soulard's Notebooks

*Letter to United States Senator
Barack Obama
(Democrat, Illinois)*

June 22, 2008

12:03 a.m.

Coffeetime Coffeehouse—

my armchair

Portland, Oregon

Dear Senator Obama,

I am writing to you tonight in the full & hopeful expectation that come about seven months from now, you will be sworn in as the next President of the United States. You'll take the vow to defend the Constitution, be nodded toward by a group of important faces, & a cheer will ring the globe. You will be a kind of new bride not just to this nation, but also to the six billion souls around the world your words & actions will affect from that winter's day on.

The nightmare of George W. Bush in elected office will be over. He & his criminal brothers will be pushed off the world stage. Perhaps to continue their treacherous pursuits further in the shadows. But you, sir, will be the man chosen by a nation to bring its highest office back into common light.



MP: KS

Let me say several things as preamble here. First, I would have rathered that Al Gore take his rightful office at last next January. It was his to take, in my view, not yours or Senator Clinton's or Senator Edwards. Certainly not John McCain's. He chose to defer; millions sighed, & respected this choice.

Second, much of what I think & feel toward you involves your own word: hope. As a Senator, you did not stick out so very much. None of the Democrats have this decade. There is something of the coward in you each & all, that you saw the nightmare of George Bush & Dick Cheney & did not act beyond smoothly worded protests to bring them down. The wounds of this country & the world lay at your feet, & afresh each time soldiers die in Iraq, each time the American economy is raped new by the corporate elite. Each time the corporate media whores reduce the complexities of human lives to an embarrassing photo or an intense argument about principles of law & morality few if any of them understand, much less care for when the day's headline moves on.

Hope. You came into our lives using that word. *Hope*. It is a word for wishes, for suffering, spoken by the vulnerable, the desperate. You said it over & over until many of us became willing to keep listening. To allow hope again.

We didn't lose it when the World Trade Towers fell on 9/11/2001. *However it came that they fell*. No, we began to lose hope more when we saw Bush obliterate Iraq for no reason, & nobody stopped him. Not the United Nations. Not the Constitutional separation of powers that says that Congress shall declare wars.

We lost more hope when Bush stole another election in 2004 & nobody blinked. We lost more as the death toll in Iraq climbed into the many thousands & was forbidden to be seen even on our televisions.



MP: MVK

We lost hope when we were told we could be locked up forever, when we were told we were being spied on, when our costs for bread & gasoline skyrocketed while the few made billions.

So, Senator, you said hope & we salivated, our souls sweated for it. Hope, like faith its close kin, raises even when there is no logic to it.

This draws me near to my point. I don't expect you to cure every ill or solve every woe. Men will still hate for reasons of skin, ethnicity, sex, countless other even more ridiculous reasons.

Children will still cry, adults will still get lonely & drink til the pain numbs. The elite of this world will still find ways to suck the planet's varied & plentiful tit like it was theirs more than others' by divine right.

No, you are one man, with finite powers of office & intellect. And a big, big shitheap to go at. Eight years of George W. Bush's smiling okie-dokey pard'ners as he squats upon every creature in this world & lets his private shit-storm of demons fly in every direction. Walk off hitching up his drawers & saying "y'all remember what all I done for you."

Senator, Mr. Obama, *Barack*: it's simple. *Don't fuck it up*. We will get you into office, by the millions will we get you there. Right now there's no real fight left in Bush's remains. Oh, like Jack Nicholson says in *Easy Rider*, "they'll talk to you & talk to you & talk to you" but they are re-trenching. Even a gang of rapists will take a break for a piss & a cold brew.

We'll get you to next January when you will take that oath on that bright winter's day. Then we'll do more than watch: We'll keep doing what's getting you to that day, what's pushing opposition from your path.



MP: MVK

See, being our hero right now is hard work but I think it's kind of easy too. Lots of pretty speeches, lots of perty promises. No, sir, wait until you are *our President*, the one we blog & shout & phonebank & argue & canvass & donate for. *Just wait.*

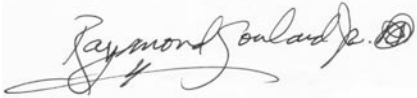
You *will* end the War in Iraq. You *will* stop the spying on American citizens. You *will* get us out of the prison cage of petrocrats. You *will* help the *poor* & the *sick* & the *vulnerable* of this nation, & you *will* rejoin this nation to the world of nations. You *will* become the world's number one advocate for peace among all men & women, & healing with our mother planet.

If you do not. If you deal from the bottom with the corporate jackal whores consuming all blindly these many years, if you go soft on defending the defenseless, if you turn to bullets & platitudes as though salvation, we will drive you, sir, from office to a place in Hell that will look far up toward George W. Bush's.

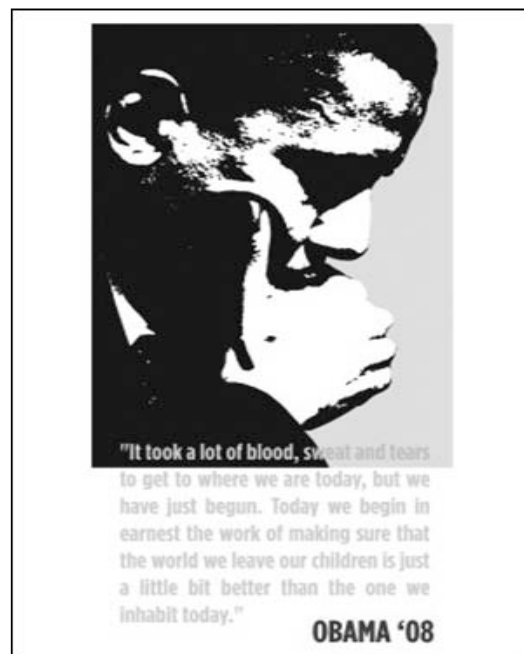
That's what it's like to have raised our hopes, to hold them, to ask we work our days toward that January day & your vow to defend the Constitution. That's what is going on, the spirits raised up & roiling right now.

I will vote for you. I will work for your campaign after my own ways. I will *cheer* when you take office. But I will be with millions watching thereafter, & still ready for whatever comes next.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond Souland, Jr." with a circled "R" at the end.

Raymond Souland, Jr.
Portland, Oregon





Edited by Raymond Souland Jr. ©

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Soulard

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PORTLAND, OREGON



SCRIPTOR PRESS
2008

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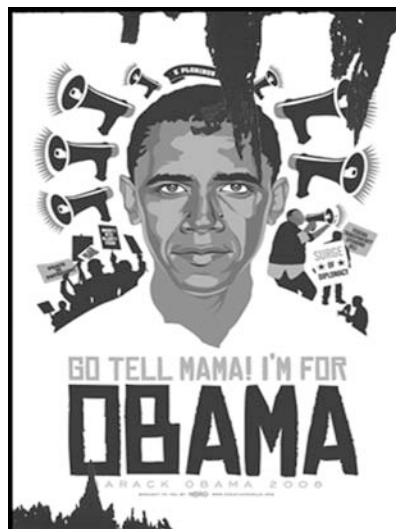
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Thanks to Kassi, Victor, Emma, Nemo, & Michael for bringing **Manifest Project** from the tangles of my mind into this world, for bringing me a renewed love & respect for the possibilities of artistic collaboration. Thanks again, anew, always, to my beloved Kassi for riding her own pain hard into comforting me at my recent job loss. I'm dazed but she says it will be OK, and I believe her. Symantec Corp., you are the last corporate entity I will put faith in. You fucked with my stability & endangered my loved ones in this lethal economic time. I will watch for your fall without regret.



Ralph H. Emerson



B Is for Body

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<http://www.verbatimag.com>

Let's play a shapes game. Let's pretend for a moment that B isn't a letter but a picture. What does it show? Look: B. Turn the page clockwise for a second so the curves of the B come down toward you. What do you see? I see breasts. Wishful thinking, you say? Well, maybe, but why shouldn't we have a picture of breasts in our alphabet? They're important. The Chinese root for "mother," *mu*, is written with a B-like pictogram showing breasts, and no one thinks that's strange. Besides, not only does B look like breasts; it also begins most English words for them: *breasts*, *boobs*, *bazooms*, *bust*, *bosom*.



Breasts are rounded body parts that come in pairs. So are *eyeballs*, the *balls* of the feet, and the *balls* or *bollocks* of men's groins. Likewise the *buns* or *buttocks*: the *bottom*, *backside*, or *behind*—further known as the *bum* to Brits, *booty* or *boots* to American blacks, and *butt* to Americans in general. I've also heard the ad hoc B expressions "move your *Buxton*" and "shake your *bon-bon*," for the fact is, it's not breasts that are B's true specialty—it's bottoms, and not just in English, either. "Make your butt like candy," says a Brazilian ad for a diet clinic: "Make your *bom bom* like a *bon-bon*." Another Brazilian word for "butt" is *bundas*. (*National Geographic Traveler*, Jan.-Feb. 2001, p. 54.) Indonesians say *buntut* and *bokong*. The Dutch say *billen*. Afrikaaners say *boude*.

All Blown Up

B means womanly roundness. Personal-ad shorthand for a non-thin female is *BBW*, "Big Beautiful Woman." A woman with a plentiful bottom is *broad-beamed*. A big-breasted woman is *buxom*, and if that's all she's got going for her, she's a *bimbo*. The French artist Sophie Calle, who has devoted individual days to living out different letters of the English alphabet, chose on her B day to become a "*Big-Time Blond Bimbo*." (See the cover photo of her 2001 book *Double Game*.) But why stop at one bimbo when you can evoke a whole bunch? A few years ago I saw this teaser for a graphics file on America Online: "A *bevy of bovinely blossomed bronzed bikinied blockhead blonde babes bouncing bodaciously become brainlessly, blindly beachward bound*." Woman, archetypally round! Camille Paglia, writing about the Venus of



Willendorf, a fat little prehistoric fertility figurine, called her “*bulging, bulbous, bubbling . . . bent over her own belly . . . eternally pregnant. She broods, in all senses . . . swollen . . . weighed down by her inflated mounds of breast, belly, and buttock*” (*Sexual Personae*, 1990, pp. 55-56).

Paglia’s intuition got it exactly right: B is about swelling, inflation, bulges. In a paper¹ published the same year as Paglia’s book, the linguist John Lawler used very similar terms to gloss *bl-* words like *blimp*, *bladder*, *bloat*, and *blister*. They represent “contained fluid,” he said, “(either liquid or gas) under pressure, with distinctive distension of its container, producing a natural roundness.” Plain *b-* represents it too, as in *barrel*, *ball*, *balloon*, *billow*, and Paglia’s “*bulging, bulbous, bubbling*.” And how do we make balloons and bubbles bulge? By blowing: we *blow* bubbles, *blow up* balloons.

Blowing, you see, because B evokes “airiness” through mouth-pantomime. It’s an airy sound. Put your hand in front of your mouth and say “buh”—you’ll feel a very distinct puff of air that you can’t feel if you say “nuh” or “yuh” or most other consonants. I’m certain that the air-puff made by articulating the sound of B is why many languages, including our own, tend to use B words to name inflated, bulging things. And the written letter has evolved a bulging shape to reinforce the idea, a shape explicitly resembling the most bulbous part of the self-interested mammals who invented the alphabet: a nice round bottom.

Big bottoms! Anything inflated seems big almost by definition. Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary partly defined *big* as “full of something . . . distended, swoln.” *Big* is one of the prime B words, one of the prime B ideas. When Jonathan Swift created a race of giants in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), he called them *Brobdignagians*. The biggest dinosaur was a *brontosaurus*. The Bible mentions a huge animal called *behemoth*, thought to be the hippopotamus (Job 40:15). That’s Hebrew, but big animals tend to have B names in English also: *bull*, *bear*, *buck*, *boar*, *buffalo*, *bison*, *bronco*. Australians call big male kangaroos *boomers*, and elephants are known to circus people as *bulls*. I had an elephant named *Babe* as a child, and the big blue ox of the legendary lumberjack Paul Bunyan was named *Babe* too.

Paul *Bunyan* was a giant himself, of course, and it’s very common for fictional B characters like him to be oversized. Watching TV one afternoon a few years ago, I suddenly noticed a fat cartoon lady called “Aunt *Bertha*,” and then a few minutes later in a different cartoon, a huge wrestler called “Lardo, the *Belgian Behemoth*.” I knew I was on to something. Eventually, though, it became clear that B’s “body” and “bottom” connection concerns “animality” as much as “size.” The bottom is the most prominent part of the body; and popular speech often equates it with the entire body: *save your butt, get your butt over here*. But it’s also the least civilized part of the body: part sexual lure, part outlet of the digestive system, the last stop of the unlovely process that begins with *burps* and winds through *bellies* and *bowels*. We can’t disown it, all that sexual and digestive stuff, but we can

¹ John Lawler, “Women, Men, and Bristly Things: The Phonosemantics of the BR- Assonance in English,” *Michigan Working Papers in Linguistics*, Winter 1990, reprinted 1992 in *The Joy of Grammar: A Festschrift for James McCawley*, ed. G. Larsen et al. (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins). For more on B, see Margaret Magnus’s book *Gods of the Word: Archetypes in the Consonants* (Kirkville, MO: Thomas Jefferson Univ. Press, 1999), especially the Introduction and pp. 52 and 87-93.

give it dirty names, and they're often B names.

B Is for What????!!

So much so, in fact, that in P.G. Wodehouse's novel *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (1939), Viscount Bosham objects to being addressed as "*Lord B.*": "It sounds as if you had been starting to call me something improper and changed your mind." Improper indeed! B is the bawdiest of letters, giggling from the *bathroom* to the *bedroom*. It's "the *birds* and the *bees*," "the *beast* with two *backs*"—sex in all its variations. Ordinary sex is *boffing*, *balling*, *bonking*, and *boinking*—plus German *bumsen* and French *baiser*. Variations include group *gangbangs*, oral *blowjobs*, anal *buggery*, and sado-masochistic *bondage*. A penis is a *bone*, a vagina a *beaver*, a sphincter a *bunghole*.

Bawdy B! *Bawdy* itself is an adjective from the noun *bawd*, which means a "madam," a woman who runs a *bawdy house*—a *brothel* or *bordello* full of lissom nude girls: *bare-assed*, *buck naked*, in the *buff*, in their *birthday suits*. Half a century ago, strip shows were called *burlesque*, and curious men watched *blue movies* and ogled nightclub *B-girls*. What exactly is a B-girl? Supposedly it's short for *bar girl*, but who knows? B is helplessly suggestive. During a walking tour of France in 1878, Robert Louis Stevenson chatted with some village women who thought our word *bread* sounded "frolicsome and racy"! (*National Geographic*, Oct. 1978, p. 541.)

You know what else sounds frolicsome? B names for clothes that cover B body parts, however scantily. *Bustiers* more or less cover breasts, for example, and *bikinis* more or less cover breasts and bottom. A man's bottom is covered with *boxers* or *briefs*; and before full-length trousers became popular in the early 1800s, men wore knee-length trousers called *breeches* (pronounced "britches"). Somewhere along the way, that garment gave its name to what it covered, creating a new word for "butt or rear end"—*breech* (pronounced as spelled), as in *breech birth* or *breech-loading* guns. (French also links butts with pants: butt is *cul* and knee-breeches are *culottes*.) Nineteenth-century women's trousers were called *bloomers*, although few women dared to wear them. A more conventional B accessory for a woman in olden days was a *bustle*, a little butt-enhancing pad worn under her skirt. Her breasts, which would now be covered by a *bra*, were formerly pushed up with a *bodice*; and the ripple of snowy gauze that peeked above the bodice to veil the breasts was called a *buffon* in English, a *bouffante* in French—literally, a "puff." *Bodice* itself is an antique word for "corset" (which is why steamy historical novels are called *bodice-rippers*), and it originated as a variant spelling of the English word *bodies*, just as *corset* is from the French *corps* "body."

Belles and Beaus

Lovely bodies, so *buff* and *beautiful*. Imagine a *bathing beauty*, a *belle* of the *ball*, a *beach bunny*, a *blond bombshell*, a *bodacious babe*. Remember that all-B riff I quoted earlier about the "beachward bound" blondes? Think *Baywatch*, think *Beach Blanket Bingo*. Of course, there are men at the beach too: *beach bums*, *beach boys*, *bodybuilders*, *bare-chested beefcakes*—*burly* guys, all *bulked up* with *bulging biceps*. Think Mitch Buchanan, the *Baywatch*

lifeguard played by David Hasselhoff.

Since B men fit the “hard and muscular” stereotype and B women the “soft and curvy” stereotype, it’s entirely fitting that John Lawler (who linked *bl-* words to “inflatedness”) linked *br-* words to “primitive sex-role stereotypes.” These are the animal selves that B’s embody. Look at the life trajectories outlined by *br-* words. For women, who give *birth* to *babies*, the *br-* path is *braids*, *broad*, *bride*, *breed*, *brood*, *brats*. For men, who *boast* and *battle*, it’s *brawn*, *brag*, *brave*, *brawl*, *brutal*. My colleague Margaret Magnus says that if B were a fairy tale, it would be *Beauty and the Beast*. If this isn’t clear already, we need only look at typical B-name characters in stories and movies. They’re embarrassing, they’re so perfect.

B women are pure sex. *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) has a barmaid called *Bet Bouncer*. Updike’s *Rabbit, Run* (1960) ends near a pinball machine called *Bouncing Betsy*. (Come to think of it, I once called a classmate *Bountiful Beth*, which amused her, fortunately.) Little *Betty Boop* shimmies through movie cartoons. *Bombay Boola* the belly dancer perks up Garbo’s film *Susan Lenox* (1931). Beautiful *Buffy* slays vampires on TV. On the comics page, *Doonesbury* features the curvaceous *Boopsie*, *Beetle Bailey* has Miss *Buxley*, and *Blondie* has pretty *Blondie Bumstead* (née *Boopadoop*). The most famous children’s doll in the world is a curvy blonde named *Barbie*. There are real B women too. A girl named Mary Cathleen Collins turned herself into the voluptuous actress *Bo Derek*. Ex-showgirl Barbara “*Bobo*” Sears married one of the Rockefellers. And the original *BB* was *Brigitte Bardot*, the French cutie who inspired Sophie Calle’s *Blond Bimbo* act.

B men are more complex than B women. Sometimes they can be sexy, too, either in okay ways, like James *Bond* and Rhett *Butler*, or in very bad ways, like Travis *Bickle* and Norman *Bates*. More often, though, B men are simply violent. Remember my cartoon wrestler, the *Belgian Behemoth*? Well, *Bruiser Brody* was a real-life wrestler. Stallone’s boxer was Rocky *Balboa*. *Bull Bushka* is a stocky football coach in the comic strip *Funky Winkerbean*. K. C. Constantine’s novel *Brushback* has a jockish *bully* named *Bobby Blasco*. Bullies make good villains, of course: Ichabod Crane had his *Brom Bones*, Popeye had his *Bluto*. A friend of mine calls his crazy boss *Bozo the Beast*. Wife-beaters make good villains too: *Bobby Benedetto* in Anna Quindlen’s *Black and Blue* (1998), *Billy Bigelow* in the musical *Carousel* (1945), and the protagonist of Thomas Dunn English’s poem “*Ben Bolt*” (1843), whose sweet Alice with hair so brown “wept with delight” at his smile and “trembled with fear” at his frown.

Other B men are just slobs and idiots, though often funny ones, like Archie *Bunker*, Al *Bundy*, *Babbitt*, Mr. *Bean*, *Beetle Bailey* in the comic of that name (the one with Miss *Buxley*), the cartoon duo *Beavis* and *Butt-head*, and Shakespeare’s *Bottom*. You know, *boors* and *bozos*, *buffoons* and *bubbas*—especially “*big*, *bumbling*, *beefy*” ones, as my mother once remarked. *Bl-* names are especially good at conveying this. One of the most endearing of all fictional slobs is John Belushi’s drunken frat boy *Bluto Blatarsky* in the movie *Animal House* (1978). In much of the English-speaking world, *Bluto* and his buddies would be called *blokes*—ordinary and unpretentious guys, the kind of men personified as Joe *Blow* in America and Joe *Bloggs* in Australia. Many made-up *Bl-* names specifically signal *blandness*, averageness: Leopold and Molly *Bloom* in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), the village gossips Harold

Bloggs and Mrs. *Blizzard* in one of my old short stories, or the office drones Max *Blumf* and Susan *Block*, who appeared together one day in the comic strip *Dilbert* (Feb. 1, 1998).

The best one-word gloss for B is “unrefined,” a quality that draws reactions ranging from genial amusement to outright disgust. B is dismissive. A little nowhere town in American slang is *East Buttfuck* or *East Bumblefuck*. The British intensifier *bloody* and its B euphemisms are mostly scornful: *bloody* awful, *blooming* idiot, *blasted* fool. We spit out our scorn along with B’s little air-puff: *bitch*, *bastard*, *bullshit*.

Two Bubbles

Another notable characteristic of B is doubleness. As you’ve probably noticed, an awful lot of made-up B names have two B elements in a row, from *Belgian Behemoth* to *Bombay Boola*. Alliterative names are found with all letters—think of *Tiny Tim* and *Peter Piper*—but B alliterations are much more common than any others. They’re funny. Pick up any comic novel and you’ll probably find a double-barrelled B name in it. For example, the Wodehouse novel I mentioned earlier has two: detective *Buxton Black* and jealous boyfriend *Bricky Bostock*. (*Ben Bolt* from the old poem gets mentioned too.) Other Wodehouse stories feature *Beefy Bingham* and the boxer *Battling Billson*. Double-barrelled B’s are as common as air: *Big Ben*, *Big Bertha*, *Big Brother*, *Big Bird*, the *Big Bang*, *Big Business*, *big bucks*, the *big boys*, the *big bad* wolf. And that’s just with *big*s.

There are plenty more without *big*s: the *Baby Boom*, *boomerang babies*, the *Bronx Bombers*, the *Butcher of Baghdad*, *Blackbeard*, *Bluebeard*, *Buffalo Bill*, *Buffalo Bob*, the *Bible Belt*, *Black Beauty*, *Beau Brummell*, the *Brady Bunch*, the *Beanie Babies*, the pudding called *brown betty*, the British army musket *Brown Bess*, Melville’s *Billy Budd*, the song characters *Billy boy* and *Bill Bailey*, Clint Eastwood’s *Bronco Billy*, and the African-American cowboy-movie star Herb Jeffries, the *Bronze Buckaroo*.

I came across half a dozen double-barrelled B’s the week I was writing this section. The newish comic strip *Baldo* is about a dreamy Mexican-American teenager named *Baldo Bermudez*. When his family dresses up as a Mexican-style band, his father calls them the *Balladeering Bermudezes*, although Baldo himself prefers the name the *B Boys and Girls* (Mar. 16 and 19, 2001). In the Mar. 18 men’s fashion supplement of *The New York Times*, which took bachelors as its theme, the phrase “*Broadway Brummells*” appears on p. 78, and “*bachelor boudoir*” on p. 90—along with a 1970 photo of Hugh Hefner “cuddled on a fur blanket with his then-paramour and Playmate, *Barbi Benton*,” aboard their private plane, the *Big Bunny*!

With all this doubleness I think we’re back to unconscious echoes of bottom-cheeks. Who was that romantic Southern gentleman? Rhett *Butt*-ler? Here’s the name that clinched it for me: in John Knowles’s boarding-school novel *A Separate Peace* (1959, chap. 7), the narrator recalled his athletic-looking classmate *Brinker* Hadley: “Brinker’s salient characteristic” was “his healthy rump . . . those healthy, determined, not over-exaggerated but definite and substantial buttocks.” The context is matter-of-fact rather than erotic: a B character is equated with a healthy rump. It’s a B thought.

Other writers have B thoughts too. In *Walden*’s chapter “Spring,” Thoreau mused

on how the word *lobe* ends with “the soft mass of the *b* (single lobed, or B, double lobed).” A century later, A. H. Fremont’s *Alphabet Flip Chart* (1974) noted that B’s “make *bubble* sounds in words,” and that the little *b* even “has a ‘ball’ or ‘bubble’ at the bottom of the letter. The big B has two bubbles.” Pop! Bam! Boom! Bang! There go the bubbles! That’s another “salient characteristic” of B: “loud noises,” the sounds of inflated-looking things exploding (*bursting, blowing up*), being hit (*beaten, buffeted, boxed*), or creating semi-articulate noises (*bawling, braying, babbling*).

Bingo!

“Big round things,” “silliness or contemptibility,” and “impact and loud noises”—I have written elsewhere that these three B qualities are identical to the three “nasal-stop” qualities I described in “The Most Lively Consonants in the World” (*VERBATIM*, XXV/3, Summer 2000²). Nasal-stop words contain consonant-combinations like *mp*, *ng*, *nk*, and *nt*, which yield noisy *thumps*, round *rumps*, and slobbering *drunks*—compare B’s *bumps*, *butts*, and *boozers*. I remarked that the first of those words, *bump*, was “the most typical and versatile” nasal-stop word of all, for it embraced each of the three potential nasal-stop meanings. That makes *bump* a perfect B word too, since it variously denotes “impact or its noise”, “rounded thing,” and “amusingly contemptible thing” (“lay there like a *bump* on a log”).

I also observed in my earlier article that English nasal-stop meanings are often matched in Indonesian nasal-stop words, like *dentang* for English *clang*. This happens to be true with many Indonesian B words as well, like *besar* for “big,” *bundar* for “round,” *bulat* for “ball, circle,” and *bahak* for “burst of laughter.” Indonesian even matches English by supercharging some words with both features, a B plus a nasal-stop: *buntut* “butt” (mentioned earlier), *busung* “bulging,” *banting* “to hit,” *bentet* “to burst,” and *bising* “noise.” These are extraordinary parallels for two unrelated languages.

What are we to think, except that B is a cosmic prankster who uses earthlings as ventriloquist’s dummies to tell its jokes? In March 2001, when the airplane manufacturer Boeing suddenly announced that it would be leaving its longtime headquarters in Seattle, a local TV station promptly dubbed this the *Boeing Bombshell*. So reported *The New York Times* on Mar. 22, and three days later it illustrated its weekend summary of the Boeing story with a photo of a jet flying out of Seattle. The picture’s caption? “*Buh-bye*”!

² See http://www.verbatimag.com/26_2.pdf

Ric Amante

3 A.M.—Dave's Backyard

I can hear the moonlight
bouncing off the oak leaves,
feel it brushing against
the bellies of the swifts,
taste it on the backs of the salamanders
as the northwest wind rattles
the cracked greenhouse windows
while the feral cats lick their paws
after lapping bowls of silence.
And the distance between earth and sky
is the playful toss of a horseshoe
on a rough plot empty of everything
but weeds and iron and moonbeams.

Baptism at Dusk

Scrape of a prayer
from behind the sun,
and the shadows have crept away
to quivering grasses,
the crickets and owls opened shop,
and you, you fool,
you're in the middle of a field
stuck to the edge of a miracle—
miracle snagged on
twilight's peace and longing.
Overhead first star.
Within tumultuous pageant.
Here you'll take a new name
and one will be given and
all strikes at love will abound.

Memories of Grandfather

An older bridge
in quieter times.
April's gray ice
snagging then crashing
in the falling of waters.
Grandfather's pale pink flesh
in a pale yellow shirt
smelling of cigars and cologne,
sweat and aging.
He takes you by the hand
over ill-spaced planks
pulling you, terrified, along,
because the river's white snarl
will suck you under
if you look too long and hard.

An older man
in quieter times
crossing a bridge
with his grandson.
An undying Sunday afternoon
soothing the crush of the milltown.
The workers now drinkers
ringing the heavy oak tables
of the Franco-Belgian Club,
and among the beer,
cards, smoke, and laughter
a six year-old boy
sipping cream soda with a straw,
thinking happily to himself—
“so this is what old men do.”

Down in New Orleans

He used to be able to make such good use of levees,
staring out calmly and taking in nothing—
no time, no memory, no future—
placid water, ravishing sunlight,
a small green insect on the back of his hand.
But today his first shot is plain, high poison—
today levee and heart ache and rot
as the river rolls jet-black and deathly.
And it's not about this place, that loss, some reckoning—
not about anything with a face or reason for or against—
just an addict's fall from god to orphan,
a burning ship without captain or dock.
He needs to slit his mind and bleed it in the waters,
salvage his sight by looking upward,
shake free his limbs and beat a retreat
before the darkness sets in forever.
He knows what he needs to do,
has another shot and tells himself—
"Tomorrow, surely tomorrow."

Mano Nano

Sometimes you're a particle,
sometimes a wave—
split or fused by desire's dual alignments.

The motion to cram in more love
has never been field-tested;
the notion of time as prayer
carries the day.

Until a space opens in the heart,
old and calm enough now
to adjust the settings
to any frequency.



MP: EP

G.C. Dillon



Serendipity is a Happy Accident?

She awakes in darkness. She looks to the night sky to search out the Great Bear constellation. It always leads her home, but it is not there; there are no stars. No trees. There is a canopy above her much like the roof of her Father's bark longhouse in *Werowocomoco*. That is her Father's capitol. He is Wahunsunacock, a *weroance* of her people, a chief, most powerful leader of the entire land. So she is, in fact, an "Indian Princess."

A man stands before her. She guesses he is the age of the man she is prepared to marry. He smiles to her. His skin is pale, and a thick mustache and [what he would call a VAN DYKE] beard covers his chin. He wears a blue cape [or should that be LAB COAT?] the color of bay water. She tentatively whispers, "*Winkápew, nitáp.*"

A loud voice fills the other's longhouse. It is powerful. Crisp. Like her Father speaking as chief. Authority incarnate. Commands unquestioned.

TEMPORAL DISPLACEMENT FACTOR: 500.624. SUBJECT: FEMALE. AGE: TWELVE YEARS, APPROXIMATELY. CLOTHING: ANIMAL HIDE, TANNED CERIVIDAE. ANALYZING SPEECH PATTERNS. INITIALIZING TRANSLATOR PROGRAM: ALGONQUIN LANGUAGE SUB-SET.

"Hello, my friend," the man says in words she knows. His voice is sweeter, kinder she thinks. "Your being here is an accident. Or at least we call it an accident. I'm sure the reason is buried in the cold equations of the physics. Beneath a Sigma 9X-squared or a trinomial expression [the translator hesitates, UNKNOWN]."

He stumbles a moment speaking with her. In his culture, she is a year less of a teenager; in hers, she is a young woman. Both are just barely adults to their peers. He is a graduate student intern. His acne is worse than hers, which he uncomfortably notices.

"Wasn't planned at any rate. We can't plan it. It's random. We sent someone back in time, so someone or something has to balance it out by coming here. Not always a person, sometimes a plant or animal. It's like a lottery. You should have seen the pterodactyl [the translator hiccups before stating: LEATHERY WINGED CREATURE] we got once. Well, maybe better you shouldn't've.

"Oh yeah, my name's Joss." He holds out one hand. She jumps back, but he is not truly threatening.

"I am Matoak," she says.

"We have some time to kill. Oh, no pun! I am allowed to show you around. To show you the wonders tomorrow brings. Come on."

The solid flap of the room hisses open, sounding like an angry, slithering snake. They walk out into the corridor. “We can use the glass tram, but not travel in it,” he says. Another flap cycles open with the sound of a loud Summer wind. The panorama of his city spreads out before her. Tall, long buildings crowd the view. These are so like her Father’s longhouse stood upon one end. Strange giant birds fly about. Their wings do not flap or beat. Towering stone pipes billow out white smoke, like a winter fire of burning chicory or palmetto. Ants—what must be ants—walk upon two legs only.

“Sorry,” he says, “it’s not the best side of the laboratory. We have the fuel cell factories and their smokestacks. The cells may be pretty green, but the hydrogen extraction process is powered by some ungreen sources. Even with the *Clean Coal*, they wreak havoc with the shell-fish beds, I’m told.”

She knocks upon the clear surface. “It’s steelglass.” [The translator brain-farts again. TRANSPARENT IRON.]

“Is this my *Tenakomakah*?” she asks. [THE TIDEWATER, the computer translates.]

“Yeah, water’s the main ingredient going in and going out of a fuel cell.” He laughs at a joke she cannot understand even with the aid of the translator.

“Where are the four-legged people?” Matoak asks.

“Oh, we’ve got zoos. Even big preserves. The [ANIMALS] are fine. I wish I could bring you to the Washington Zoo. You’d love it!”

“Where is my home? Where is *Werowocomoco*?”

“There,” he says, “it’s there.”

* * *

She awoke into the brightness of Spring daylight. It was just a dream, she told herself. Thank the Great Spirit! She gazed up to the sun, but a shadow fell upon her. She turned her head to see the old woman who had raised her. Her people had no queen, and her mother had been sent far away upon her birth. This aged one sufficed. Mostly.

“Matoak, your father needs you. Do you know what he requires?”

“Yes,” she said. “My Uncle Opechancanough has captured one of the newcomers. I am to throw myself across the stranger to protect his life.”

“Very good. It will be his death and his birth to our people.”

* * *

The stranger was thrust upon a large rock. He lay across it. His coat fell open, and his soiled white shirt stood out. His eyes grew wide as he scanned about the capitol of *the* Powhatan, and wider still as he focused upon Kocoum, her future husband. In his hands, Kocoum carried the foot long hickory shaft of his *tumahák*. One end had a stone axehead that she had seen him chip himself. The other end was hollow to allow the drinking of tobacco. It was a peace pipe and tomahawk together: the two sides of a relationship, friend or adversary.

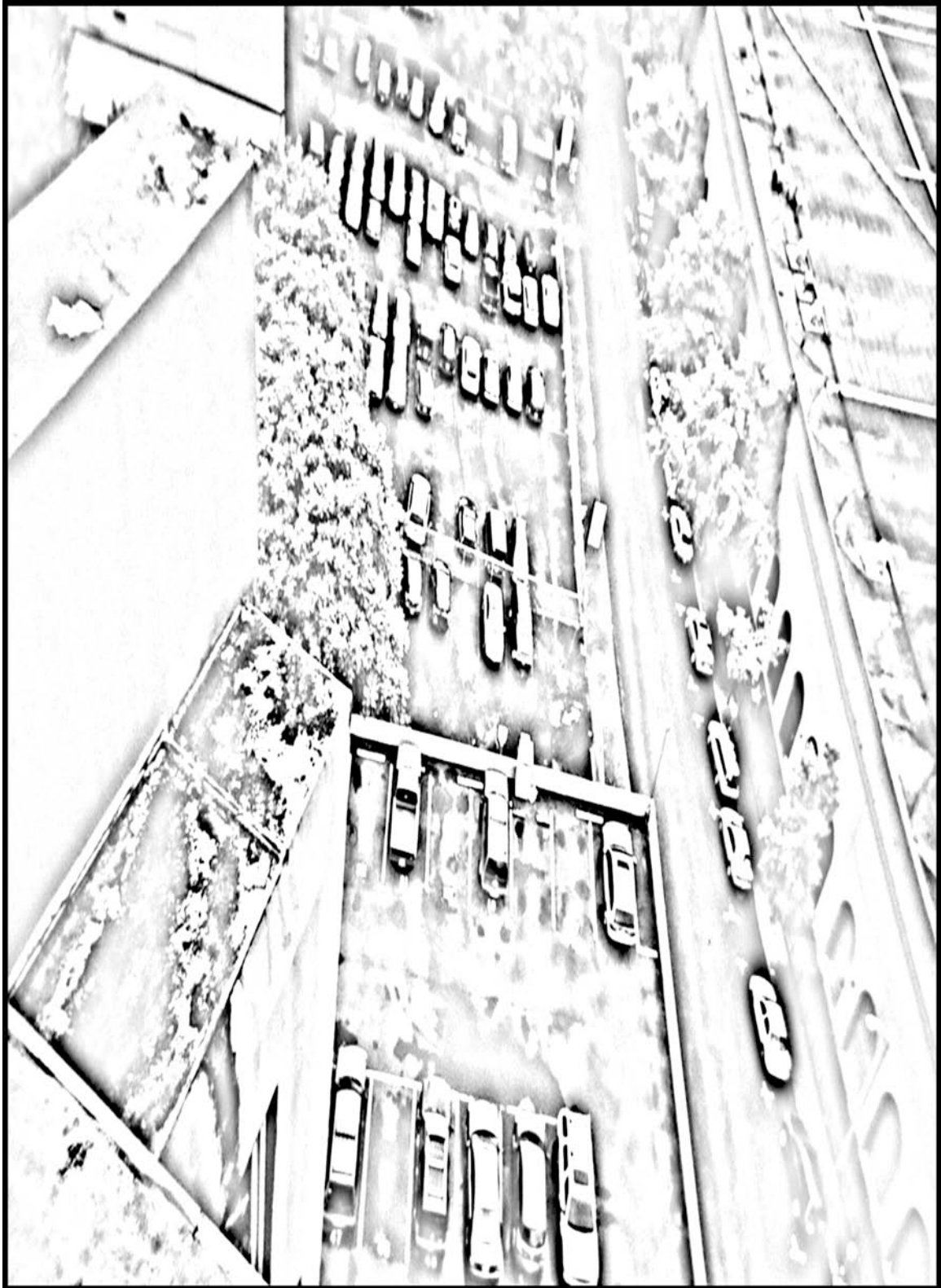
The newcomer looked like Joss, the pale man of her visions, but with a heavier beard. The man who had shown her the *wonders* of the day after tomorrow's sunrise. Matoak ran between her betrothed and the newcomer. Kocoum raised his weapon as if to club her.

"Pocahantas," the Powhatan said, calling his daughter by her childhood nickname for her wanton nature. "What do you do?" It was all for his staged plan for the stranger from the island across the water. She thought of her vision before answering.

"We cannot let this man live. His people cannot despoil our land. Chief Powhatan, my father. **Kill John Smith!**"



MP: EP



MP: RS

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

second series (continued)

“Beware & be aware.”

xxxi. Remedial

The way is called dis-illusion, say again,
walk the humble path among shifting men
& common ideas. Reck the tallest wall & how
its indefensible hours nears. Great glaring
tome, too, ivory & gold, god to minions &
artillery, later come its burn, blind smiling dust.

The way is called dis-illusion, that
any heart finer than its bowels, that
any golden vessel of faiths not some long,
subtle hustle for sweet young meat or
a begged home beyond the soil. Not to die
another ragged man buried in undone vows.

The way is called dis-illusion, waking hour's
new brutal reports, no bridge of glass high
enough for silence. All passes, & passes again.
Everything shifts, everything's soil. What comfort
in breathing, a meal of warm bread, safe
nest, laughing voice, music & starlight.

The way is called dis-illusion. No despair
a distant flame might not distract. No ecstasy
a street corner & errant carriage might
not crush. One night we drink & eat & roar,
swaying masters of the great feast. Another
broken, world again a blunt, endless cage.

The way is called dis-illusion. Dear flicker
 of a radiant hour, that letter, her stroke,
 tonight's lullaby. Memory of a lilting shadow,
 trace of voice or pur. Now awake in the dark,
 a few shapes recall the world. Exhale, return.
 Everything's shit, everything soil. All's blooming despite.

xxxii. Waking Hour's New

Everything to dust, no less.
 This hour's rosy light, lashless song.
 A turning face's known smile, some ocean's
 deep mapless explain, the preacher readying
 contrary prayers.
 Tall man in war, still a boy's green fields
 in his mind.
 All's blooming, everything to dust, no less.

xxxiii. Moving Hard

Nothing goes away, nothing returns.
 A blind face still turns, moaning for more,
 moaning to break.
 The hour when youth snapped, when
 mystery became hustles, years minutes.
 Moaning for more, moaning to break,
 for a glaring love's ceaseless pitch,
 for an end to beginnings, & a cease
 to all ends.
 Nothing goes away, nothing returns.
 Not to meet again in flesh, I will
 sate you all in dust.

xxxiv. News from War

Small bombs half-made lie among
 icons & manifestos. In the other room
 a lone singing, self remembers & soothes self.

Once, at a signal, we too hid our children
 under the family's prize piano, listened
 to small heartbeats impossibly quick. No more.

The singing stops. Listens. Picks up
 another clay dish. Resumes the song
 about a forgotten town, in flames.

xxxv. One and All

Not demand of world an answer &
 thus not build an answer's world
 Hunger, not cloak it like a slattern's bauble.
 Fear, what it does not teach or tell.
 Death, the hard rift in any explain.
 Or wash free with the stars in morning light.

xxxvi. Cadmium Skies

All alone, all suffering, yes. All is suffering,
yes, so one suffers. The great books preach so,
of men with glaring swords & hard, clean faiths.
They cry, they roar, their prayers rise on
burning swine & well-stoked women to bursting
skies, fists gesture the forests, mountains,
challenge legends of the seas. They fall too.

All alone, all suffering, yes. Great books preach
of men resting astride harems, among their gods,
dreaming toward what will alone can do.
They fall too. Whisper in spittle, breathe in
drowning gasps, reach a last time toward
the glare, falter, know. No happiness
in loving the bars, endless singing their song.

All is suffering, yes, so one suffers. Each
will choke blind & pass the hard rift,
its burning blankness, past what great
books may say. Music of an open hand.
What the chirps & morning light gave hint
when, in glistening hours, nothing explained
& all shone without a net.

xxxvii. Curvilinear

Soft, tend the croon of bones. Reck the dust
running these hours, crossing new blooms,
a life's spark among squall & demise.
Wish for what next. Want of what lost.

Fine new torso yet sweetening, soft, draping
rosy light, how smiling gestures spied,
a turning word sugar's thoughtless gift,
through flesh loosing a fiber at a time.
Nights blowing wide of a thousand pink
splendors & frail, forgotten shades.

Soft, again, let what to come not cut
through this great hungry cry. Arrive now
with unmade questions, more ready in
yesteryear's coming salmon dusk.

Breathe, breathe twice, mix your hours
fine, invent your god's strength sole
by lesson of how last it goes.

xxxviii. Demise: A Wish

Better than deathless kingdoms of men,
bury me in the wordless glare,
burn me & my every raucous page,
puff my ash to woods & stars;

Let me out of man-dreamed eternal,
little faith in men unbound by mortality,
all it gods & heavens will still garb in
commandments & roar with primal bloodlust;

Burn me in the glare, let specks
of my being feed tree or star or hungry
trout, so much the better, not to die
another ragged man buried in undone vows;

Bury me, burn me, the desert I scatter
will remember, the sea sweet a touch
to what I was, stars & woods will shine
on because once I shone; and, if not,
there's a pretty idea to a short, hard being
& a long, windblown forgetting.

xxxix. All Night

What cracks the world of its central
 tangle: whither bound? Or what flesh
 remembers when none else, markings
 of lost hours & tumbled vows?

When still a fine new torso, faith sums
 in a sparkle, a chase to the water,
 sugar's fresh excitement. Dreams squall
 through in possibles not eternal.

New love comes in rosy shade, lashless
 song. Mercy what flesh remembers
 washes free with stars in morning light.

What cracks the world's tangle is
 how & again it cracks, & does not fall.

xl. Near Memorial

We remember in the movement of hands,
 a voice from another room,
 one holiday, maybe two.

The years were music, food, & plans.
 We remember & learn to grieve.
 Grieve, to remember better.

xli. Always With You

The way is Dis-illusion, & the flames
 will dream your nights, & the rose petals
 will consume them. Wherefrom, reckon
 the great tomes, guides whereto, but scant
 explain a fine torso blindly burning hours
 to excite & know. Way is dis-illusion,
 ever many musics hum & away, cries
 from rooms where some eat others,
 two claps, want's strap, now sun again
 & a meal in silence. Is dis-illusion,
 the sands corrode tracks laid by kings
 with gods for eyes & worms for will.
 Dis-illusion, breathe twice & again in this
 gallery of painted skulls. Awkward rose
 petals, delicious in gait. Canvases of men,
 long mixtured with dust. Voices sniff voices,
 music of a dreaming hour's passing,
 hours & musics hum & away.
 The way is Dis-illusion, no man will
 gaze upon his world & wish to know this
 well. Burn the pages, burn the skulls,
 the sand, the petals, the canvas itself.
 The way is Dis-illusion. Nod & burn the canvas itself.

xlii. Full Moon Over Desert

Tonight I am mortal. Know the starshine
 will outlast me, the high desert scrub,
 the long chasing wind. Some last day
 will come, some sad or sudden hour,
 & what next in soil or sky or else.

Tonight I am at peace with all this,
 riding a full moon into eclipse's grasp,
 going & gone in many but a few ways.
 Neither the suffering nor its explain,
 books glowing in shrines nor scented icons.

Tonight I can only think: empty the
 temples of men. They welcome when
 they should push along. Empty the temples
 of men, whatever's been learned, whether
 it's enough. Take prayers & praise alike

to the woods, the surf, to the desert
 under full moon. I am going in my
 hours because all go, I am remembering
 what shined days & what only blunt lust,
 fine-grooved hustle of a deep gene's idea.

Give up the gods as child's scrabble for
 a safe place. Empty the temples of men.

xliii. Prosper

Yon clearing shaped like a temple
in full moonlight, pass through,
once, twice, push along, no place
to catch & slow.

Remember till its shades & sparks,
without meanings or ends, a beat,
a breath, what touches each
to all, brighter with empathy.

Sometimes a nest to step around,
a sudden furred head above ground,
regard but little know its ways,
little know even closest kind's.

The morrow & daylight hours men
shape like gods, reckon us all gods
in every dim & blaring gesture,
fine & funny, soil to sky.

Best remember what shades & sparks
seen in this moonlight, what passed
through no explain. Best remember
step kind around the nests.

xliv. Tumult's Fine

*[Jackson Pollack, "Sea Change,"
oil on canvas, 1947]*

In the moment before, there was
some other, lesser furor. Two memories,
at least, one of massed clouds in childhood
pending a summer storm, the other
of an old relative dying, spittle & wrinkles,
tears & obscure regrets.

There was a dream, a blurred flash of a lost
friend, his angular face shook, gentle
blue eyes looked defeated.

Then chaos. A world changed, what left
of the old drying blood, a single day's
headline. Still, breathing, still on earth,
much will return, tangle with the new.

xlv. Yonder Fear

*[Dale Chihuly, "Macchia,"
Blown Glass, 1986]*

Cup of liquid glass, would you
drink it? No longer mortal, now
a melting, cooling star, would
you drink? Warping into a ridged
wordless glow, would you trade
the human world for a perfect
sheen, smooth rim to luring
depths, an ocean, a sky, perfect
fragment explaining one speck to all?

xlvi. Borderless

*[Georgia O'Keeffe, "A Celebration,"
oil on canvas, 1924]*

When all below was gone
there still was sky. We collected
the many clouds, wisps & fists
of them, named & grouped the
dawns & dusks because we were
still men & women. One day a rainbow
& lightning, it all came back.
Even dreaming that night, nobody spoke.

xlvi. Last Night's Question

What first catches the beast's reck,
crushed bloom's scent, stretched blouse,
maybe a weightless laugh frosting
the night's air? The beast recks,
by spy & sense. What news here? Again
something fecund ripens the square.

Never mulls the subtle or gross ways
of want, this world a cage more
for its beauty than its foulness. What
gain in knowing close the bite in blood,
in standing full moon & daylight
both before racial imperatives?

Perhaps the beast lopez into chase,
with honied words or an hour's prized
trinket. Perhaps beast & beast settle
in an electric silken manger & passion
torches their coupling into a new beast.
How to explain it, what the years mean?

Genes & chance number up the world,
 between extinction & the long cry
 for a familiar god's knowable craft.
 What was it, what was it, those hours
 between scents, what between the chase
 & the cage? What else haunts blood & bones,

& talks nightly in dreams? Are cock &
 cunt alone enough to bone up the world
 & drive purpose through its wide, wild flesh?

xlvi. Barrage

How to explain it, what the years
 mean? Some eat others. He nods
 at the numbers, signs, notices the gulls
 shat the windows again. This high up
 even. Nods, signs, better numbers soon.

Some eat others. Dreams are blood &
 bone, maps & harvests, moving glance
 of a pale slip, a smile luring with
 centuries of force. An ache as it turns
 aside, want's hustle buried high & low.

Dreams are blood & bone, skinny up
 gods for comfort if little explain.
 Mystic shades of winter dusk on city
 streets. Distant torrents roiling high
 plains. Touch of flesh to flesh, cults to why.

What the years mean? Shine, ache,
 what strange lasts. Hurry laughter,
 nearly & almost, nights sugared hours
 long with arrival & consume, the many
 forgetting rest. Some eat others. Blood & bone.

xlix. Work of Years

Who I was is who I am yet
 who I am isn't who I was while
 blood wilds streams through rock of years
 & even the brightest thing in the night
 is fading with a hunger nothing tame
 can hold back nor wild can maintain.

Does the heart eat its way out at
 last, & men simple call it death?
 Do bones fall to forever dreaming
 without days to divide & distract?
 Who I was & what I am a beggar
 scholar's work of years, faith of glass.

Hard want to make, to possess,
 to twine burst an unknown hour's knots,
 undo the collision of breath futile heated
 with diminishing figures, unknown torsos.
 Reck the empty temples, woods of
 a single tree, oceans at war, great cry

for more violence at a continent's distance.
 Burning villages on private maps, not shown
 by lights, not what I was, what I am, who you are.

l. Late Requiem for a Brother

You stood up, shaky, ignorant of the praise,
 a lost year, a lost child, one day died
 a careless death.
 To remember your first steps, new hours,
 ambers you in victory, despite the rest,
 spite the rest, wild thing, now you rest.

li. Tameless Hours

First is music, & I don't know why.
Men breathe together, hearts beat
close, love & fear swoon each high
& low, the reeds & crickets play the
wind, birds gossip & mate with whistles,
there is music, first, mystery's thrum.

Or maybe dreams, how they wantless
occur in man & beast, how they
lawless urge, tug a body closer to its
hid cavern's wish, a heart to the
great open air, empty a long dear cry
of its stones, of any fist's strength to stop.

Then there's want, or perhaps first
of all & then else follows. Toward warmth,
feeding, coupling, maybe a word or touch
that seems a moment to arc from
cradle to cradle, strike wars & wakes,
shared breath, close beats, prison & tomb alike.

Of course there's the learning &
madness some get in twining the exotic
molecule or rarer seed. Through certainty's
clouds, through hard kings throned
in sunlight to reveal beautiful dust,
nameless blows off, dance now, dance now!

None of it explains, just clanging lights
in a mind's skies, no more to work
with than tools in ground that may
or may not be, show me the spell
or devilling conjure can say other certain.
Tonight an old village burns. Everything goes.

Stray planks, all of it, stray planks
 on a wide foam, fingers cling, call up
 myths or guesses to travel the hours.
 Tales of hid nests burnt in a bolt,
 a jaw's snap, an old blood vessel damned
 breaks & finally goes. At dawn a young voice sings.

Neither despair nor hope proof of the other.

lii. A Dreamland Narrative

Find music in a sheered heart's hour,
 peculiar thrum in aching blood,
 sadness descending rhythms, music
 when warmth & light gone, shutting doors &
 grim knowing. Bruised apples, the dented wall.

Some eat others, slowly, because they can.

Nod, burn the canvas, let Art sparkle
 back to air, uncollect thought, unremark
 color, the raising shape in flesh & nature,
 sweet & suffering view of pine & cruisers.
 Burn its matter & its every reason.

Some eat others, & get hungrier for it.

Genes & chance number up the world,
 why one man eats his meal in shade
 & another in tower. Why one man nods
 & another is shifted. Why one man cuddles
 his God in coins & another cries out.

Some eat others, with bullets, with ideologies.

Yonder a clearing shaped like a temple
 in full moonlight, all may pass through,
 none may stay. Some bring a long siren
 of wishes, collected in pages, girded in
 prejudice & artillery. An iron path & its result.

Some eat others, of their wills, of their mysteries.

Find dreams are blood & bone, maps &
harvest, the flesh of every heartstrick
hour's bony question. Would you be sheered
& chuted, or world you dream, perhaps know?
What music does waking life's days partly make?

Some eat others, because they can, because
they will, because you still sleep dumb.

lii. Roseate Hours

Blood & consequence, what else, maybe
youth's ravages of full moonlight for
a desire's answer, or that moment
years later, tossing a stripling laughing
through autumn air, through something
waning within. The dying moment itself for
what least hour now remembered might have been.

Blood & consequence, heart's dearest
treasures in raw old frames, great
calls for new brotherhood, or centuries
of marching faces with God in their
chambers, & a thousand thousand
grey & roseate hours alike when
bodies needless cry & fall.

Blood & consequence, the room ruby with
candlelight, a small pink radio smiles &
reports the next war, rooted dumb helpless
in the hidden mystic singing math twining
all, preacher & scientist, symbol & molecule,
king's powerful, dying fist & eager virgin's
shade across a tavern's earthen hilarity.

Blood & consequence, the years scar
 the night's every glance, each fine
 & careless word, dreams unheeded gruesome
 with hard, strange counsel no sage
 has spoke. All chips at faith til one day
 a mound of ashes in a far gone world
 or a work no man denies & nature might allow.

liv. Revolution By Night

Nothing goes away, nothing returns.
 A smart cheek's sheen by ruby lamp
 & what the wish years ago to admire & know?
 How faith lets go, a lash at a time,
 replaced by cloakless melodies in the wind,
 by questions in the spines of broken books
 & answers scrawled above dive toilets.

Want sniffs by, on streets, in cars,
 dogs the eyes, the directionless reaching
 hands. Nothing gone, nothing returning.
 Want roots pink & black deep, rears
 high between broken walls & their
 lover fists, in dear, fragile gone hours
 where blooms scattered poor, pale rooms.

Nothing going, nothing returned,
 a beast of empires built in the fetid
 nest of that equation. Boys are clad
 in steel & pushed off in columns,
 girls dress it tight & roseate, smile
 shufflingly til a jaw nods, leans with a word

Preacher in his garden, hums with
 his god & does least harm, dying king
 hugs his mother's old book of pressed flowers,
 nothing returns, nothing goes away.
 Some hours form this life's raggy fringe,
 its known paths where woe fought
 the day, the many wars within.

Nothing returning. Nothing's going.
 There were distant lights where
 a faith taught a love or a god or
 a fine, subtle dream dwelled. Nearer
 is the cold dawn spray of rushing highways,
 the papery hand of old kin passing,
 the lapping violet drown of new love.

There was a night, maybe two, when
 moonlight crossed intention, when a face
 drew near & the great hid wings
 of the world opened out, gestured, bid,
 bid again! And you looked, decided, went,
 or held, believing through your hunger
 that other such nights would come.
 Nothing's returned. Nothing's gone.

lv. Dominion

Want is ancient & this setting hour new,
 moves to build, change, destroy, moves
 without prophecy or history, moves all.
 Crazed various thing, how rat's meat tastes
 to a starving tongue, how jewels soft glow
 an eager virgin's breast in satin moonlight.
 Crazed various thing, ferment, breath, dream,
 may burn your city to prove a faith's word,
 burn the seas themselves, no answer, no escape.
 Crazed various thing, what electrifies this
 dominion of dust, blows through a thousand
 centuries, all matters, all passes.
 Want squeezes hand & heart with urge to
 possess, swallow & consume the laws
 of men in blaze & renting cloth.
 Crazed various thing, what drives the blade
 into molecule's depths, what builds great
 edifices from which kings cry for final war,
 girded by preachers knowing a tender god
 kisses fine this cause & then all to the tankards
 for courage & fecund thighs of willing slaves.

lvi. Night Riders

I heard an old love travelled across the country after she left me,
 became a lesbian, found her way into new bedrooms by a picture of her
 nude, new crop-haired, smiling in a bathtub. Her father disowned her,
 I heard.

Beauty is sexual! The old bigot cried,
 & his ragged school still echo the lines.

I heard another love got to be a mama, gave those haunted fingers
 & crooning thighs to a bleating newborn, & I wished her well,
 remembered that fine ass on another night, begging punishment
 & relief.

Beauty is sexual, the old bigot leers from his tall hill,
 eye the way each book in the pile tips him a bit higher.

There were others, each burning deep inside lace or cotton. Each
 calling some hour love with me, finding in my eyes or touch
 carnality's best path, its blind blowing wash to new seas,
 its ferocious beast's answer called God.
 Again, if possible.

Beauty is sexual! The old bigot still among us, still wanting the belt
 a little tighter, still right about nothing much that matters.

You were years ago, & you, & you. But you'd know me yet,
 I ride the same chaos you bore those nights, I still believe
 in that look each of you gave me, the one that said human history
 was emerging, caterwauling from your breasts & belly, & its cause
 hid in swamps & stars I'd cry & never know.

lvii. Testimonie

Wherefrom hints, brokenly, whereto.
This, genes & chance.

A man hits the world new with big,
dumb fists, roars music for a sweet,
reckless want, wild heart's heat.
He drives his years hard, mates, spreads
a fruitful seed, laughing, gives from what
he has, learns from what he knows.

She'd told him, "pray to me on your
darkest days, to the lord & to me,
look up, remember, believe, & pray,"
& the man prays when the days warp
& a fist won't solve, & a song little salves,
he prays, & keeps his legs moving.

When was it that wish for what next
became want for what lost?
When did your hill begin to descend,
lesser shimmer at a farther view?
When did you cease thinking of new hills,
when did sentiment's poison finally take?

Come a later time, some winter's sterile hour,
the man passes, broken, breathe, relax,
dream now & gone. Is he taken to his
Christ now, his mother & all the saints,
or new soil for the next man testing
young muscles against a stronger world?

In a far city, I dreamed too, your son,
waked suddenly, blue, no answers again,
but comfort tonight that you are now
past both knowing & its lack.

lviii. Étoile

[Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, "Dancer Seated on a Pink Divan,"
oil on canvas, 1885-1886]

You call the world an effect, how it leans in,
for a touch for a coin, something in purse
or pants. Sometimes trades back a heavy
promise called God, or a sate of loins,
or lonesome, maybe a song in green.

Worse, does not lean in, the hours pass silent
on a carriage, in café, a park, muted barks
through rented walls. Which, then, you ask,
grows a heart kinder again, unclenches
those still-grabbing fists no longer a babe's?

I adjust these straps, look around again
for something, for the beauty you seek
for the rage you feel. I pose for you
because I cannot dance. I love for you
because the world gave me this body, &
this heart, & little good explanation.

lix. Underneath

I dreamed you'll find it underneath,
response to the preacher waving his tome
& pointing to a sky rigged with explain.
Underneath, where the pretty faces &
spangling nights devolve to plain chaos,
to flesh's consume & sure decay.

The hungers & their statuary, the music
equal to deep manless jungles &
the onyx fractures of urban despair.
Underneath, tickled in unsure thighs
& muscular gestures to the stars alike.
The pain, neither source nor explain.

Ecstasy, where not fruited on one smile's
 tree. Answers, without need to sum &
 cohere. Underneath, I dreamed you'll find
 why this war, & the next, why men roar
 & wish to call it language, wish to call it
 song, wish to call a later hour revelation's,
 willing living in time & law at all.

I dreamed you'll find it underneath,
 a comfort will not abandon you in
 your hungriest years, will assure you
 that no man's hand forever clouds
 the skies, & that indeed he roots
 like all in the same bloody muck.

lx. In Strange Service

"What purpose?" I ask the Beast in dreams,
 when we'd prowled & pursued each other
 while. "To what purpose?"

"Some eat others," he growled. "A butchered torso
 crosses the bridge to her door at dusk,
 removes her parcel of fruit & lays by her weapon,
 her walls silken with thoughts for revenge,
 & memories of every cat, & the dead teacher
 who was kind, gave her what she wanted,
 many books, tender hours, & compassion."

He lunges but I escape, no cry, little fear,
 one room to the next, one year then another,
 he follows but calmer. "World bides its wicked,"
 I reply, "their shifting promises to salve &
 reveal, draw plain the gentle scarlet path
 from hearts' old trenched lusts to fine temples
 of explain to prayer's electric ride up
 dark moonbeams & final burst of happy flesh."

“Tender hours & compassion!” he roars to shake
 the labyrinth’s countless floors, where
 some torsos laugh & ride harder, hearts
 blindly touch & gnaw close, & others
 kneel for the manacle, the cruel tongue,
 hope that best high begins sunken low.

“What passes while simple faces watch clocks?”
 as he departs me. “What better hustle than
 any king’s great cry to war, luring gestures
 to easy superiority, any preacher’s offer
 of a God that favors one over another,
 than to cast a stripling squalling into this
 world with no better explain that what his
 answerless race can offer?”

“What purpose?” I roar at the Beast when
 later I come upon him drowsy with sup,
 something sweet & taken held close. “Why ferment,
 why breath, why dream? Why want’s rootless tangle?”

The Beast circles me but does not lunge
 again, now knows the peril in this. “In every
 hour since the night she fell, she arrives
 in the clearing shaped like a temple
 in full moonlight, now a wanting half-child
 again, dressing for his every pleasure in
 glaring new love’s ceaseless pitch.”

We clash as I try for his sweet prize,
 without his strength I can only sing &
 sing again, wake the hour’s tenderness & compassion.

“Nothing divides us but the walls hands
 have made,” he told her that last night,
 burning private words into her hips & shoulders,
 with candlewax & her seething blood & night’s
 frankest juices, as she lay before him
 a wide open eye in love, soft croon of bones,
 moaning & crying their nights a blind
 blowing wash to the sea.

“What purpose?” I cry again to the
 Beast as he urges me nearer, we share
 our sweet prize now, enough & more.

“Nothing salves the closest wounds,” our
 prize thrashes & sighs. “Happiness lies
 in loving the cage, endless singing its song.”
 She cries out from the deepest star
 within her dream-torso, whole & hungry,
 the Beast licks as I stroke, her singing
 now louder, the temple of moonlight
 roars & shakes all the secret worlds within.

We let her go slowly, softly, to what remains
 of her by daylight, an old vessel damned
 to finally go, like faith, a cringing lash at a time.

“To what purpose?” I whisper to the Beast,
 as we haunt & howl these nocturnal
 caverns & corridors. “Little but blood &
 consequence,” he replies & the old bones
 tearing & framing his chest seem nearer
 to burst. “Stray planks on a wide foam,”
 he continues. “Tonight an old village is burning.
 “Everything goes.”

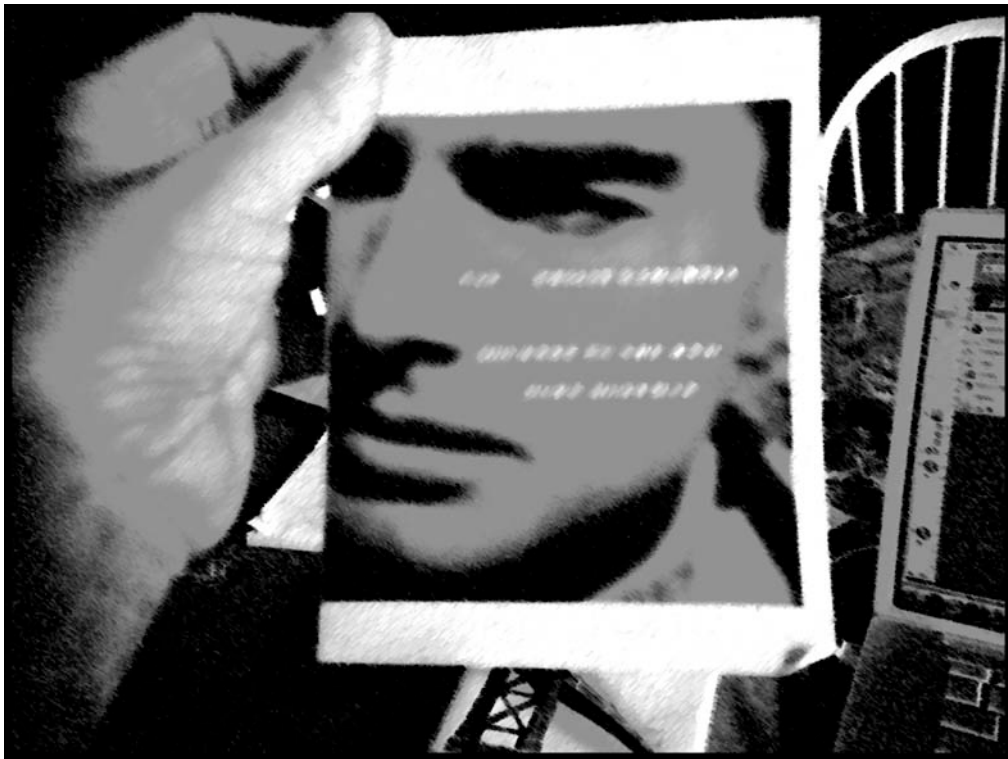
Her death is long in the old house,
 her memories a fine thing of love
 & delusion. She watches her life in
 reverse, regains the legs he would kiss
 & say strode through his heart & made it
 strong, the maiden’s hips they would
 ride when the scarlet hour was theirs to share.

“Many books, tender hours, & compassion,”
 she whispers through her sick blood to
 those who tend her like an old carcass.
 The cold room bleats of a code, a key,
 sad endless war. The Beast comes to warm
 it in music, in memory, how once
 she undressed half-turning, smiling, slowly,
 as her new lover writhed & fed on
 how her flesh prayed the light.

“Nothing goes away, nothing returns,”
 she says softly to the image plunging
 between her thighs, breathing slower,
 the years curl together now, she is
 newer, the world still above its many clouds,
 back to the hour when he returned
 & closed the door, two soft hands to take
 her gladly one last time, a dark blade
 for his failed try to bring her with him
 from the world, its prisons hid deeper
 than earth in every heart, consume them
 together in dearest love’s going morning light.



To be continued in Cenacle | 66 | October 2008



MP: MVK



Gabriel Garcia Marquez

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings

Translated by Gregory Rabassa

On the third day of rain they had killed so many crabs inside the house that Pelayo had to cross his drenched courtyard and throw them into the sea, because the newborn child had a temperature all night and they thought it was due to the stench. The world had been sad since Tuesday. Sea and sky were a single ash-gray thing and the sands of the beach, which on March nights glimmered like powdered light, had become a stew of mud and rotten shellfish. The light was so weak at noon that when Pelayo was coming back to the house after throwing away the crabs, it was hard for him to see what it was that was moving and groaning in the rear of the courtyard. He had to go very close to see that it was an old man, a very old man, lying face down in the mud, who, in spite of his tremendous efforts, couldn't get up, impeded by his enormous wings.

Frightened by that nightmare, Pelayo ran to get Elisenda, his wife, who was putting compresses on the sick child, and he took her to the rear of the courtyard. They both looked at the fallen body with a mute stupor. He was dressed like a ragpicker. There were only a few faded hairs left on his bald skull and very few teeth in his mouth, and his pitiful condition of a drenched great-grandfather took away any sense of grandeur he might have had. His huge buzzard wings, dirty and half-plucked, were forever entangled in the mud. They looked at him so long and so closely that Pelayo and Elisenda very soon overcame their surprise and in the end found him familiar. Then they dared speak to him, and he answered in an incomprehensible dialect with a strong sailor's voice. That was how they skipped over the inconvenience of the wings and quite intelligently concluded that he was a lonely castaway from some foreign ship wrecked by the storm. And yet, they called in a neighbor woman who knew everything about life and death to see him, and all she needed was one look to show them their mistake.

"He's an angel," she told them. "He must have been coming for the child, but the poor fellow is so old that the rain knocked him down."

On the following day everyone knew that a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive in Pelayo's house. Against the judgment of the wise neighbor woman, for whom angels in those times were the fugitive survivors of a celestial conspiracy, they did not have the heart to club him to death. Pelayo watched over him all afternoon from the kitchen, armed with his bailiff's club, and before going to bed he dragged him out of the mud and locked him up with the hens in the wire chicken coop. In the middle of the night, when the rain stopped, Pelayo and Elisenda were still killing crabs. A short time afterward the child woke up without a fever and with a desire to eat. Then they felt magnanimous and decided to put the

angel on a raft with fresh water and provisions for three days and leave him to his fate on the high seas. But when they went out into the courtyard with the first light of dawn, they found the whole neighborhood in front of the chicken coop having fun with the angel, without the slightest reverence, tossing him things to eat through the openings in the wire as if he weren't a supernatural creature but a circus animal.

Father Gonzaga arrived before seven o'clock, alarmed at the strange news. By that time onlookers less frivolous than those at dawn had already arrived and they were making all kinds of conjectures concerning the captive's future. The simplest among them thought that he should be named mayor of the world. Others of sterner mind felt that he should be promoted to the rank of five-star general in order to win all wars. Some visionaries hoped that he could be put to stud in order to implant the earth a race of winged wise men who could take charge of the universe. But Father Gonzaga, before becoming a priest, had been a robust woodcutter. Standing by the wire, he reviewed his catechism in an instant and asked them to open the door so that he could take a close look at that pitiful man who looked more like a huge decrepit hen among the fascinated chickens. He was lying in the corner drying his open wings in the sunlight among the fruit peels and breakfast leftovers that the early risers had thrown him. Alien to the impertinences of the world, he only lifted his antiquarian eyes and murmured something in his dialect when Father Gonzaga went into the chicken coop and said good morning to him in Latin. The parish priest had his first suspicion of an imposter when he saw that he did not understand the language of God or know how to greet His ministers. Then he noticed that seen close up he was much too human: he had an unbearable smell of the outdoors, the back side of his wings was strewn with parasites and his main feathers had been mistreated by terrestrial winds, and nothing about him measured up to the proud dignity of angels. Then he came out of the chicken coop and in a brief sermon warned the curious against the risks of being ingenuous. He reminded them that the devil had the bad habit of making use of carnival tricks in order to confuse the unwary. He argued that if wings were not the essential element in determining the different between a hawk and an airplane, they were even less so in the recognition of angels. Nevertheless, he promised to write a letter to his bishop so that the latter would write his primate so that the latter would write to the Supreme Pontiff in order to get the final verdict from the highest courts.

His prudence fell on sterile hearts. The news of the captive angel spread with such rapidity that after a few hours the courtyard had the bustle of a marketplace and they had to call in troops with fixed bayonets to disperse the mob that was about to knock the house down. Elisenda, her spine all twisted from sweeping up so much marketplace trash, then got the idea of fencing in the yard and charging five cents admission to see the angel.

The curious came from far away. A traveling carnival arrived with a flying acrobat who buzzed over the crowd several times, but no one paid any attention to him because his wings were not those of an angel but, rather, those of a sidereal bat. The most unfortunate invalids on earth came in search of health: a poor woman who since childhood has been counting her heartbeats and had run out of numbers; a Portuguese man who couldn't sleep because the noise of the stars disturbed him; a sleepwalker who got up at night to undo the things he had done while awake; and many others with less serious ailments. In the midst of

that shipwreck disorder that made the earth tremble, Pelayo and Elisenda were happy with fatigue, for in less than a week they had crammed their rooms with money and the line of pilgrims waiting their turn to enter still reached beyond the horizon.

The angel was the only one who took no part in his own act. He spent his time trying to get comfortable in his borrowed nest, befuddled by the hellish heat of the oil lamps and sacramental candles that had been placed along the wire. At first they tried to make him eat some mothballs, which, according to the wisdom of the wise neighbor woman, were the food prescribed for angels. But he turned them down, just as he turned down the papal lunches that the penitents brought him, and they never found out whether it was because he was an angel or because he was an old man that in the end ate nothing but eggplant mush. His only supernatural virtue seemed to be patience. Especially during the first days, when the hens pecked at him, searching for the stellar parasites that proliferated in his wings, and the cripples pulled out feathers to touch their defective parts with, and even the most merciful threw stones at him, trying to get him to rise so they could see him standing. The only time they succeeded in arousing him was when they burned his side with an iron for branding steers, for he had been motionless for so many hours that they thought he was dead. He awoke with a start, ranting in his hermetic language and with tears in his eyes, and he flapped his wings a couple of times, which brought on a whirlwind of chicken dung and lunar dust and a gale of panic that did not seem to be of this world. Although many thought that his reaction had not been one of rage but of pain, from then on they were careful not to annoy him, because the majority understood that his passivity was not that of a hero taking his ease but that of a cataclysm in repose.

Father Gonzaga held back the crowd's frivolity with formulas of maidservant inspiration while awaiting the arrival of a final judgment on the nature of the captive. But the mail from Rome showed no sense of urgency. They spent their time finding out if the prisoner had a navel, if his dialect had any connection with Aramaic, how many times he could fit on the head of a pin, or whether he wasn't just a Norwegian with wings. Those meager letters might have come and gone until the end of time if a providential event had not put an end to the priest's tribulations.

It so happened that during those days, among so many other carnival attractions, there arrived in the town the traveling show of the woman who had been changed into a spider for having disobeyed her parents. The admission to see her was not only less than the admission to see the angel, but people were permitted to ask her all manner of questions about her absurd state and to examine her up and down so that no one would ever doubt the truth of her horror. She was a frightful tarantula the size of a ram and with the head of a sad maiden. What was most heartrending, however, was not her outlandish shape but the sincere affliction with which she recounted the details of her misfortune. While still practically a child she had sneaked out of her parents' house to go to a dance, and while she was coming back through the woods after having danced all night without permission, a fearful thunderclap rent the sky in two and through the crack came the lightning bolt of brimstone that changed her into a spider. Her only nourishment came from the meatballs that charitable souls chose to toss into her mouth. A spectacle like that, full of so much human truth and with such a fearful lesson, was bound to defeat without even trying that of

a haughty angel who scarcely deigned to look at mortals. Besides, the few miracles attributed to the angel showed a certain mental disorder, like the blind man who didn't recover his sight but grew three new teeth, or the paralytic who didn't get to walk but almost won the lottery, and the leper whose sores sprouted sunflowers. Those consolation miracles, which were more like mocking fun, had already ruined the angel's reputation when the woman who had been changed into a spider finally crushed him completely. That was how Father Gonzaga was cured forever of his insomnia and Pelayo's courtyard went back to being as empty as during the time it had rained for three days and crabs walked through the bedrooms.

The owners of the house had no reason to lament. With the money they saved they built a two-story mansion with balconies and gardens and high netting so that crabs wouldn't get in during the winter, and with iron bars on the windows so that angels wouldn't get in. Pelayo also set up a rabbit warren close to town and gave up his job as a bailiff for good, and Elisenda bought some satin pumps with high heels and many dresses of iridescent silk, the kind worn on Sunday by the most desirable women in those times. The chicken coop was the only thing that didn't receive any attention. If they washed it down with creolin and burned tears of myrrh inside it every so often, it was not in homage to the angel but to drive away the dungheap stench that still hung everywhere like a ghost and was turning the new house into an old one. At first, when the child learned to walk, they were careful that he not get too close to the chicken coop. But then they began to lose their fears and got used to the smell, and before they child got his second teeth he'd gone inside the chicken coop to play, where the wires were falling apart. The angel was no less standoffish with him than with the other mortals, but he tolerated the most ingenious infamies with the patience of a dog who had no illusions. They both came down with the chicken pox at the same time. The doctor who took care of the child couldn't resist the temptation to listen to the angel's heart, and he found so much whistling in the heart and so many sounds in his kidneys that it seemed impossible for him to be alive. What surprised him most, however, was the logic of his wings. They seemed so natural on that completely human organism that he couldn't understand why other men didn't have them too.

When the child began school it had been some time since the sun and rain had caused the collapse of the chicken coop. The angel went dragging himself about here and there like a stray dying man. They would drive him out of the bedroom with a broom and a moment later find him in the kitchen. He seemed to be in so many places at the same time that they grew to think that he'd be duplicated, that he was reproducing himself all through the house, and the exasperated and unhinged Elisenda shouted that it was awful living in that hell full of angels. He could scarcely eat and his antiquarian eyes had also become so foggy that he went about bumping into posts. All he had left were the bare cannulae of his last feathers. Pelayo threw a blanket over him and extended him the charity of letting him sleep in the shed, and only then did they notice that he had a temperature at night, and was delirious with the tongue twisters of an old Norwegian. That was one of the few times they became alarmed, for they thought he was going to die and not even the wise neighbor woman had been able to tell them what to do with dead angels.

And yet he not only survived his worst winter, but seemed improved with the first

sunny days. He remained motionless for several days in the farthest corner of the courtyard, where no one would see him, and at the beginning of December some large, stiff feathers began to grow on his wings, the feathers of a scarecrow, which looked more like another misfortune of decrepitude. But he must have known the reason for those changes, for he was quite careful that no one should notice them, that no one should hear the sea chanteys that he sometimes sang under the stars. One morning Elisenda was cutting some bunches of onions for lunch when a wind that seemed to come from the high seas blew into the kitchen. Then she went to the window and caught the angel in his first attempts at flight. They were so clumsy that his fingernails opened a furrow in the vegetable patch and he was on the point of knocking the shed down with the ungainly flapping that slipped on the light and couldn't get a grip on the air. But he did manage to gain altitude. Elisenda let out a sigh of relief, for herself and for him, when she watched him pass over the last houses, holding himself up in some way with the risky flapping of a senile vulture. She kept watching him even when she was through cutting the onions and she kept on watching until it was no longer possible for her to see him, because then he was no longer an annoyance in her life but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea.



MP: MVK



MP: NB

Michael Van Kleeck



Look up, America!

Anger's been mined to extinction, there's
 no art left at the bottom of
 its oblivion caves,
 a whole generation starved to death
 on its bitter gruel,
 Depression, too, is almost spent, time to
 close those veins and march on
 to the next wild frontiers,
 This map points to Hope!
 It points to the unlimited forests of Love!
 Less to be gained from strife
 than from unity!
 Less in the daily darkness,
 head under your covers,
 than from the bright striped sunshine
 eyes fixed on sunlit horizons-
 America, you've spent too much time
 heads down, what could you find in
 those caves save for a tunnel
 back to the crown?
 The sun is too bright for staring,
 too bright to read,
 but just feel for the shining rays of peace,
 the heat will lead you on!

Meeting Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I saw the sparkling eyes I'd sought standing
 beside me on the chaotic corner of
 Columbus and Broadway, North Beach San Francisco,
 and I'd forgotten the journey, forgotten why
 I'd put up with all-night trucks and
 street fights, crowded cafes, and deliciously
 heart-stopping cheesesteaks, I'd come here
 to see Ferlinghetti, to shake his hand
 and say thank you and to maybe
 grab hold of the vanishing muse leaving
 for its next host, old man Ferlinghetti
 still bright and healthy, but he's not
 forming memories anymore, and slowly
 this world's slipping from him, and
 Vaclav Havel, and the peacemonger poets of
 the last great generation need new troops
 to battle in these ongoing wars over hearts,
 love must rise over all, above the conflicts
 and the cancers and the technologies expanding
 out beyond our control, eating the wonder-filled eyes
 of youth before our children can absorb
 all the glittering lights of hope
 and promise, the return to Eden we
 bring forth in words and fantasies,
 the trail to Nirvana is a steep climb and
 generations fade as they carry the
 young to unforeseen heights,
 Mr. Ferlinghetti, let me take the
 sherpa's guiding hold up this
 once unscaleable mountain,
 and we'll dance together in the new sunlight
 that will shine the morning's dawn
 from this mortal ledge
 where we'll part ways.

Virginia City, Nevada

The Comstock Lode gave up its silver decades ago,
but now the true treasures of the deep seep
through mercury soils, bubbling up from
collapsed mine shafts and singing through
ancient pine timbers, ripped out from their
thousand year Sierra heaven gazing down on Tahoe
and cursed to bear eternity's burdens rotting
just above hell, shouldering hillside skeletons
left to die by robberbarons who stole what they
could from their Mother's earth, but didn't have
the patience to wait for the essence
of the Inferno to come free and rise
into this windswept hilltop city, the
spirits stirred awake and drew in Beebe
and Clegg, the acid freaks, the mad monks,
and now an odd and motley assortment
waiting for the next gold rush to
flood this ley-line town with wild
hopeful dreams and the prosperity of
inspiration, the rush of the mad ones
coming up the hill to once again rescue
Virginia City!

Arcata, California

Behind the Redwood Curtain, Earth's flag
 stretches in the wind above Arcata's central square,
 rare blue skies fill the horizon and the birds
 of spring bare their shoulders to drink
 its magic lovesick rays,
 at the corner coffeeshop baristas contemplate
 competitions and cut hearts in latte foam
 and gossip about other coffee bars, Starbucks
 kept at bay by the trees but Dutch Brothers
 brings their mafia roaring around the
 curves of the Redwood Highway,
 A's hats and Kurt Suzuki jerseys and "Catch
 Crabs!" listening to amateur baseball
 on scratchy AM radio,
 neighbors smoking joints greet each other
 on the square with "smells nice!"
 two palm trees, three book stores, but tense fog
 seeps into this fresh air, this city
 built on the backs of fallen redwoods
 now moves to defend the remnants,
 the last stands of their guardians,
 their thousand-year leaders
 who've seen Renaissance already,
 outsiders beware and don't act suspicious,
 don't come from the DEA or the USFS,
 come here to bare it all under
 blue skies and bring a jacket,
 the cool fog and rain comes in fast,
 soaked up quickly by the tree
 sentinels, storing up their reserves
 for one last stab at eternal peace
 behind the Redwood Curtain.

“MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!”

This is your sign

HERE

NOW

Take this exit, coming up fast, your car's worn

out and your psychic radiator is

blowing steam all over,

incinerating the thoughtless children

licking at the rivulets like icicles,

Step up! Slam down your words, the ones

you love and hate and hate to love

and hate to write, have to write,

like a plague

scabies, they are

scratch and scratch and anyone who stands

too close gets a deadly disease that the

doctor can't describe

prescribe a shot and a glass of wine

but that's the fuel,

not the antidote

“MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!”

No need for time travel to tag

today as the day when the

psychic train wobbled on its rails

and exploded in eternity's ecstasy

as the hobo poets took shotgun

potshots broadside at the passing express

“MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!”

Show me your ticket and I'll kiss you

so deeply your knees will buckle and break

and your stomach will dissolve into love's sticky jelly

Unwrap your uncertainties and disintegrate

your self-hate because

I LOVE YOU! no matter who you are

or what you write

as long as you BELIEVE!

BELIEVE until you can't cry

again, BELIEVE until my love throws

you down on your hands and knees, lying

prone facing the redeeming mecca sun,

your face buried in the soft damp decay of

a forest regenerating itself from

the bacteria and the shrinking viruses
 of diseased decades going dark,
 "MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!"
 I'll write my own Declaration of
 Independence when I break free
 from the muse's satin shackles,
 the short, orgasmic pleasure of
 FUCKING THE FAR BEYOND
 replaced by the post-coital dread
 of becoming nothing
 a sentenced spider who just spent
 his eternal sperm
 on a spontaneous widow not worth
 these webbed words left behind
 "MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!"
 Sign up right here and
 practice your performance-
 The judges are decapitated.
 The priests have all gone to sleep.



MP: MVK



Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Why ? [a new fixtion]

(continued)

liii.

Two climax in a single act become three falling away over years until the single act's issue tucked into a box to crumble back into the infinite. What else?

Luna T's Cafe roaring jolly Noisy Children's farewell weekend has come a feeling sad & pridely both. It's been years. Awhile even the band all five at the bar with its regulars.

"Knock 'em dead, kids! You're really good!"

"Yah, call it your Comeback Tour!"

Ronnie Pascale, lead guitarist, hair shorter than once but still a rock-n-roll tumble, says: "It's coming back around, that's for sure. Bands like ours are out there again on the road & making records. Good ones. I feel less lonesome. Some are damned good too. Mercury Rev. Wilco. Low."

"Who?"

"Nah, they're not around no more!"

Tumble of raunchy laughs.

Americus nods to Mr. Bob the barman. "Where's the crazy old man?"

"He's not around as much lately. Goes home early."

"Sick?"

"I don't think so. Old, but not ill, Richard."

He nods. Bothered, though.

"That TV show on tonight? Sometimes it's on special nights."

"Let's check. It's gotten unpredictable lately."

A new show is on, however. A man walking a flat landscape, low piano music, fast & nervous, & the sound of wild galloping along.

Walks & walks, his face not shown. Black & white film fades hardly noticed to color, colors, many colors, piano music becomes organ, long leaps of notes, nervous to frantic, & then the colors overwhelm the scene & there is no man nor landscape & the music is electronic smooth & flowing til the colors leak away & the music dies slowly until there is silence on the screen & blackness & the TV is off as though it had never been turned on.

"What the frig was that?"

"I dunno. Put the TV back on."

"The clicker won't work!"

"Ahh balls!"

The bar TV won't come back on, try as they might, Mr. Bob fussing with every aspect of it short of pulling out his toolbox & tearing it open.

"I don't think it's broken," says Americus, as he leaves. "I think it's that TV show that was on. The machine got scared."

liv.

He hadn't gone to see the old man's place in years. Ever? But it mattered. The band was going on tour & it could be weeks or months returning. Sort of, since they would be around during shows too. Complicated. Good.

But he knew the street, Harvest Street, where he & Reb & Franny lived too, some blocks further down. He'd not once in all these years even seen Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker walking down the street to or from Luna T's.

Yet here was the building, called, oddly, the Iconic. The old man's mailbox was unlabelled. He caught the main door as someone was leaving.

Up two flights, yes? Only two apartments on the floor, one had on it what Americus recalled now for sure from years gone: an obscure symbol for faith below the silver knocker. He'd looked it up then.

Knock. Knock knock. OK. Now wait.

Movement inside, old man shuffling sounds. Then silence. Then more silence.

"It's Americus," he said too loudly. "I'm here to see if you're OK."

More old man sounds. Nearer now.

"The band is leaving on tour," he explains unnecessarily.

Now near the door.

"Chuck said you weren't around lately. You OK?"

Door latches undoing.

OK then.

The door pulls open as far as a chain will let it, & the darkness inside issues little report.

"Tell me how you are."

"Wishing to be alone."

"Are you sick?"

"It doesn't matter. These are days beyond reckoning for the mortal lives of men."

"Can I see you?"

"Not with your eyes."

"Listen, old man, there are people at the cafe who care a lot about you. My daughter first among them. I'm not going to let you die some obscure martyr's death if I can help it."

A laugh, cold, like an iced black cave.

Americus, now uncertain, backs away from the door a bit. "I can't make you do anything. But you do have friends. They'll take care of you any way they can."

A long silence. "I know." A longer silence. "I'm grateful. Sometime later today I will come along. Thank you." The door shuts, the locks slide back, an old retreating step fades.

lv.

I look out her window & for a moment see a brick wall near to view & remember some other year in a far city when someone copper if not red-haired cared awhile.

I hear her hitting the craggy hash pipe hard. "Till all this is a dream?" I snap.

"Perhaps till it's all real," she replies without rancor.

"Real seems the least important aspect of things."

"Yet you insist always on more of it & better. You try to run real through every whim of yours, every fancy you shake for its real bones to break out."

"I saw someone & thought of you, remembered what you were to me."

"I let go less easily than many others have."

"I lost you for awhile. Someone encompassed my every inch inside & out. She lingered then left."

I hear another long hit on the bowl. "I don't remember you smoking hashish at all."

"You kept reinventing me til I disappeared. I've come back but more on my own terms."

"No longer my muse?"

"Not quite yes. Not quite no. You'll have to figure it out."

"Do you know?"

"I know that none of my previous guises fit. You might still summon them but it will be sentiment at best to me."

"This book has some skeleton to it, some bones & muscle."

"Some, yes."

"You're part of it."

"Yes."

"But in a new way."

"Always."

I draw the heavy curtains shut & the room devolves to faint candlelight & an unfamiliar incense. I take the chair I happen to knock into. Sit.

"Can I write from here?"

"Do you need another candle?" Answering herself, she lights one by my side. Her face too briefly in its glow.

I push back the black woolen cap on my head, adjust my greenpatched zippered shirt jacket, lean into my notebook & wonder what next. I hear music distantly, a hard electronic flow, & grab on.

The room with no ceiling or floor first, was it round? It was white, all white, I was able to crawl all over it without falling, no door or window, I crawled, & this image traveled out of dreams with me & I was not sure what to do with it, why it was or what, now I think what if I pushed below me, rolled my body & pushed hard, what world held this room, any?

I feel shaking & then convulsing & the room opens out, loses its round shape & I crawl along a white surface neither level nor a hill, all white still around me I crawl & tumble then decide to throw my body down when there is no down. I imagine a down & there is now falling without a sense of movement, how to break this? How to burst it? I

think “Benny” in my mind over & over & over & over & hope & wait & keep saying it over
& over & over—

lvi.

Maybe he’ll come, maybe he won’t, I slow my frantic & slowly assemble my limbs,
make a freak grab for my will, stand? Maybe stand?

I don’t know if I’m standing but within the image holds, I bear it lightly,

“Better, mate”

Now he comes.

“Explain any of this?”

He laughs.

“Not a word?”

“You don’t need one & there isn’t one you’d like.”

“Not much help now you’re here.”

“Help? I can give you help. Change it. Uncause it. Disappear everything around you.
What else?”

“What next?”

“Make something better!”

I’m sitting on a dirty bus in a coastal city after a long night shilling for a corporate-
doled pittance & think: I want to disappear from this story awhile, no me but at the far end
of a black pen

that’s what’s better, what I intend, a push forward from a throw long unmade—

here it is, watch me go, the blank store windows, the chilled clear air—going, going,
the music on my little machine, the old black woolen coat on my back—my red t-shirt says
Las Vegas

going going

my beat clothes, beat eyeglasses—leaving to some other angle on these pages

going going

just as loving

deep deep loving—

leaving the bus near my home & hoping this will shoot this world somewhere new
good, dangerous,

matters even more—gone—

lvii.

Write grateful beyond the azure wings against downy sky, praise high higher from
mind & memory’s snowy drunken throne, recall what good ever, conjure it now, world not a
pull between good & evil but kindness & numb, empathy & disinterest

large black hands slowly turn over cards to reveal deeper what is, remember how it
felt to wonder how this would feel

smack the vein to pour in the icy illusion, smack again til the arm is raw with abuse

wolves shaped like boys stormed the night's empty city roads for any moment
distracting, sensation's blinding gold

what will it be like, the moment after the last one, clocks gone, history gone, long-
fingered trinkets gone, I gone

wonder what anyone else feels, what it's like to be some other body, recall belief in
breaching over til this belief itself was undone

a store window counter measures 6 billion, many argue one. Which?

Tonight lost, tonight on familiar rails because what else? Tonight a fight to hang on,
tonight too familiar, tonight what is any of this, tonight please let a desired thing happen—

Not one or 6 billion, numbers reduce to tellable lies—

Disappearing, again—

lviii.

John replaces booze with diet ginger ale & weed, & his walks take on more & more
of the acreage around him. He has no instructions but to watch, & keep clear of areas
marked "Keep Clear" but his curiosity & his boredom start to tug at him.

Before booze there had been women. Not the drunken wretches that came later—
beautiful women who lived to tame men but could be tamed themselves to a deeper
satisfaction. He hadn't had to try hard with most. Hunger was not controllable but it could
be steered in combination with charm, sensitivity, & an unpredictable sprinkle of aloofness.

It was more than get in & get out—it was get in & leave you mark, some high
flaming memory, erotic tattoo, & leave with linger.

When it didn't work, it didn't matter. Then, one day, it did. He hadn't really been
sober for a whole day after that until the night his boss's limo brought him out here.

Walking quietly through the woods took effort. He'd learned some huntsmen tricks
over time, shot a rifle once or twice, a bow, but he wasn't out here to game. He began
hoping that a peaceful relation with nature would sober him up for good, change him down
deep.

But that boredom & curiosity. Even his boss's gift of a satellite hookup to TV &
cyberspace did not appease it. He wanted to know what he was a small part of. Would black
copters one day shoot him down or government agents storm his door? Was he some
obscure, & expendable, part of the current regime's perpetual War?

"That's the best connection available out here. I got you an Apple G5 because Gates
& I do not see eye to eye. The TV has an open account for movies & cable stations. You're
doing a good job. Your presence here reassures me. My work goes better."

What work? John casually looked at the computer & turned on a few shows. But his
body craved movement, he was an athlete, or had been. Sitting in front of a blaring screen
did not excite him.

The women had loved his athletic mind. No fear, just a matter of learning the skill &
practicing it often. Make it fun, work hard, laugh about it later.

Football had been his life for some years until he got hurt. He got more pussy after because he had more time & needed new fields of conquest. Booze, too, had awhile become a sport but he grew soggy & glum. Depressed. Suicidal.

But now here was a chance to twist things about, do something new.

Find out what the fuck the boss-man was hiding.

It happened the night he was expecting his one favorite TV show, **TripTown**, to be on & it wasn't. He watched the new program awhile. John had smoked a lot of weed that day & drunk many cans of diet cola. He was high, rushing, trying to calm, & seeing his face on the TV made it better not worse. The black & white becoming color becoming a glowing pulsing throb, a metallic heartbeat & it would not end, the TV would not shut off, & he said Fuck IT to his little cabin & shakily dressed, put on his back the tall Army canvas bag he'd long had packed & ready in the one closet, & walked out, heavy black flashlight waving about the pitch.

The cold air calmed him a touch, he'd wanted to go, perhaps should have waited for the sun, but maybe not. Now he had more hours to get somewhere & back in case the boss dog decided to appear with another "gift." John was now one of his investments & he kept an owner's eye on him.

The map he had was maybe unreliable. He'd gone deep searching in cyberspace one night, high & paranoid, & found too much speculation based on too little fact. The map was one obsessee's guess at the extent & layout of Boss Dog's property. Much was empty but the trails he'd previously tested were accurate enough.

The fear came on him slowly, & worse he realized it was not pot-induced. He was into something here & each step forward was deeper, & one step soon would be the last for any kind of retreat.

That step came & he never slowed. It was time to get beyond sober boredom & see what he had left that was special, worth a shit. Boss Dog had picked him for some reason that night. Going to find out what.

lix.

Slave to nothing, so preaches the guru, eats your TV, comes home in your bookbag, save me, save me, how it hurts, how so! Make it 10 steps, make it 3, do I have to believe? Do I have to show up? Can I write a check instead?

Stands there with a chalkboard & a red candle, here's how & then this & now that. Great big grin. World easy, world knowable, world the sugar live like a long wet tongue, it's easy.

Step one. Release your will. Give it to an idea, an idea inside a building, with a smiling representative & a friendly song. There had better be a few smiling girls. Prosperity. Allure.

Step two. None of it is your fault. It's the flesh, it's the race, it's the cosmos, it's how men dispute lowly among the centuries, how the flaws have grown & all stand impeded.

Step three. Follow the shepherd. Unable to consider your life your own, its glints & gashes your mark & remembrance on the Universe, better to memorize gesture & verse, better to kneel when it's kneeling time & how high when boss daddy says jump.

Tis all, tis all. The brain you wash is your own. How clean, how clear, what roots, what fruit.

Slave to nothing, so preaches the guru, free to shape energy, color time, pluck joy from any foulness. Now a coin in the plate, now a dollar for the great book to swallow you all, watch him, guru, watch him & learn—

lx.

"He brought great books & the deep trick of empathy, it was centuries ago, he was a creature of sly eros & long rhythms, a man the women pleased by with the leanest glance. Now we remember his songs & forget his flesh. Now we burn within his calcified smiles" the preacher sang with smooth of ice, the deceptive calm of a sleeping face, he sang very fine.

"He fed our hearts on a diet of yearn & retreat, scholared us in paucity, showing its subtlest machinations, leave us not standing right but standing angry!" The preacher black fouls the sky with his words, crossing countless angry hands, conjure erotic & darkly funny too.

"He met a lover of finest passions, & the halting twig within cracked. His later years a second life, one long in woolen nights & silken music." River smooth but unswimmable, current of words mainline directly to skin, to blood. This is not fair. This is how it's done.

"I want to learn his lesson. I want to know his name. My heart blows scarce at night & I am unsure." Tears from the wet nameless source within. Faith what feet walk toward on an empty road. Faith what's left when nothing's left.

"I cannot be there when you arrive, & you won't like hearing this. Nobody will be there in that moment. Memories, perhaps. After, I don't know."

The TV flips off again & the crowd at Luna T's Cafe's bar cries its disapproval. **TripTown** now comes on randomly for minutes at a time, no more. Over, the TV, unflicked on, flicks off.

Some look darkly at Mr. Bob the barman. He shrugs. "It's a strange show."

"But where did the kid go & who's the preacher?"

"Hey, & where's our preacher? I bet he's who inspired them, all that loud talk of his."

Mr. Bob doesn't know this either. Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker has been absent T's for nearly a week now. Rich had gone to see him, said the old man would be by, but he hadn't.

No word from Noisy Children yet. They'd left in several vehicles promising word sometime during their first show. The cafe had seemed quieter than the absence of five people should have made it. It was like a slumber, how it felt now, a daydreaming building.

Meanwhile, baseball season was at hand & the champion Red Sox were again about their business. Mr. Bob found himself holding the sports page without reading.

He was lonely. His friends were traveling & even his regular customers were scarcer.
 He waited word while the drinkers continued arguing about that TV show.
 He felt tired & supposed this was age coming on.

What was it? He reached within, sorting his thoughts, regrets decades old, memories. . .

"I'm going out awhile," he announced. "You boys tend bar in turns & keep my practices in place." The regulars nodded, shaken.

"You OK, barkeep?"

"Yah. I'm just needing a stroll to clear up some thoughts. You can handle it?"

There were on it. A good barman hardly ever asks, & when he does, his people are there in less than a spit.

Took his coat & hat, went out the door with not an added word.

lxi.

A new circuit & what its glinting secret. No hour gone without scar. No hour waits without mystery.

What then.

A cabin in the mountains, a friend, a lover. A departure. No more.

Two words: I'm sorry.

A city full of shouting freaks:

Stop it! No more! Peace! Peace!

Past the armed defenders watching,
 the curious, the disdainful. Signs &
 punk cheerleaders & oversized puppet
 heads. Felt that day like home. Felt
 close.

Two words: I remember.

By water a boy & a girl, he
 loves for two, for many, she hurts
 him with power she wields badly &
 soon will wane. Trees glitter in the water.
 A peach. Hours in the mist of her words.

Two words: Fuck you.

Beat artists in a worse town,
 the empty downtown, the all-night
 diner, the library's bound old words
 lure, & jukebox taverns, & endless
 music. How high it got. Higher. Youth spending
 from bottomless purses.

Two words: You're old.

Two more: I won't.

The starry clouds above the pauvre

manse crowded with sick & broken kindred,
 moments long gone, sum them here, now,
 moments pretty with laughter, glow with
 everything possible, decades, miles, lost,
 else, two words:

It remains.

Three words: love bites hard.

A Cadillac at a cold springtime street corner, the buzz of Joy Division on the cassette deck,
 smokes Galoise unfiltered, hardcore French cigarettes.

*"Fuck Bush & all them oil whores! Fuck them. Fuck the Democrats & their pussy whine!
 Fuck the Jews & their endless war raising! Fuck the Muslims & their secret greed for self-immolation
 for Allah's glory! Fuck my ex-wife & her butch cunt new lover! Fuck my parents for calling sex
 Mommy's & Daddy's monthly home vacation! Fuck God! I'd like to with both fists!"* Pounds the
 steering wheel & hits the gas.

"Is this our TV show?"

"Dunno."

"Who's he?"

"He looks like you!"

"Ha! I'm no TV show! An' I don' talk like that, all cussin'."

Two words: *it's spreading.*

lxii.

"I don't intend to teach you everything. You'll take to some topics more than others.
 What I intend is to watch out for you. In return you'll keep me knowing the streets better.
 An old man is like an old boat, slow, less maneuverable, not safe in more turbulent, murky
 waters. Sometimes we'll work together, maybe days or weeks at it. This is one way it's done.
 There are others, unknown others. A single method would render everyone vulnerable. Not
 everything gets through."

Dylan listened, & waited for his instructions. Being young, he was used to lectures &
 then orders. He liked this man, wondered what he could need that Dylan could do.

But no instructions came. Or was it when he said "beware & be aware"? He didn't
 know but they did not come in any way he could easily figure anyway.

The mushrooms & the many hours had tired him. He knew an alley nearby where
 sleep would be safe.

But the old man wasn't done with him yet.

lxiii.

Wondering new at life's each new schism, where does what's gone go, & here a new
 angle & I do not know what it means (yes, I'm back on the page, at least for the moment).

I was months, weeks, days, hours, from tonight's concluding ride, dozens then a few pages away, tis a warm night, comely nocturnal hour, more lights flash past, I watch & do not know, but swift pen still moves, hopeful toward a high buzz & a small nest of clear moments—

A year ago I came back here ready for a new effort at making the West my home, I was in love again, even further along than I'd been—

Sigh.

One gets back nothing, & yet, truly, one carries along the pollen of lost hours, potent or dead,

I told the dude:

KILL YOUR DEMONS OR
THEY WILL KILL YOU

Many pages along, is "Why?" the question
or the topic?

Benny Big Dreams shoots up too like the dude I met at the trinket stall, but I don't know if junk or medicine. I don't know.

Pounds the steering wheel & hits the gas.

Raise a howl & believe a thousand things at once blah blah

"Everything's fine!" insisted the mushroom again!

The mind leaves traces where it pass along & is awled by matter—

What explains toothaches, lightning, & peppermint candy? Still no answer?

In a lifetime we pass countless cemeteries, closed factories, secret houses of deep violence, we see a thousand & more skies above, new skies, new patches of skies, sometimes great clouds about the wings, & who was standing on that hilly street corner the other night ragged & lost, looking for some or maybe any face, I wondered how he got so lost & if he stood there wondering too, I was accelerating with bags of food for my beloved but something in me remained there, & I thought of the ragged & those walking low, give it all a name but what? concoct some sharper word from burbling blood & long enduring bones—

TripTown suddenly comes on the TV at Luna T's Café & stays on for a stretch of hours, the hero dies & returns as a tree, a coyote, a bluish wind—there are moments when some at the bar are watching it while others see the Red Sox game—

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker hobbles frailly into the bar & settles at his seat—says nothing but watches this show intently—

Mr. Bob the barman fixes him a hot cup of tea & settles across the bar from him.

"Welcome back."

"I stayed away to discover if our lord might call me if I did, if I prayed alone in my dwelling" says softly.

"Anything?"

"Images of decay & brutality. Waste & guilt. Loneliness. Desolation. Endless unmoving hours."

"Welcome back."

"Our final hours do not arrive at our bidding, nor can we summon their shining triumph nor dismal gloom" his voice begins to rise but he stops.

"What, Doctor?"

"Where is Richard?"

"He's gone on tour. Didn't he tell you?"

Squints. Says nothing.

Trip Town appears to be coming from the jukebox, on the ceiling, within the Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock '69 poster.

Tis spreading.

Tis coming.

Then they toast me at the bar, a roaring sprawl of them & there's birthday cake very chocolate & I waver nearer & away Luna T's Cafe I love thee from within & a long way far—

"Will he bend an elbow on his birthday, barkeep?"

"No. He's moved on."

"Well, I ain't! Right, boys! Set em up! And fetch him a sody pop or whatever!"

Tonight turns out to be Noisy Children's first message from tour, & a strange one. Mr. Bob is pouring drinks left & right when it comes.

Rebecca best translates it & tells the rest. "They're outdoors at a festival. Mountains. It doesn't have a name really. Nobody paid to come but it's been happening more."

"What state?"

"Not far. Pennsylvania? I don't know."

"What else?"

"There's no electricity. Just torches. A bonfire. Like the Bread & Puppet Festival in Glover, Raymond."

I nod.

"They're coming. And a lot of others." She grabs my hand & we hurry into the bandroom. It's already changing. The walls are gone, the trees are many & tall. The drumming is everywhere. The singing is shouts & moans. Noisy Children & audience are many & one.

No roof. Sentient sky.

Bowls of water pass around, maybe dosed heavily with LSD, maybe not. I don't know, the faces stretch out forever maybe & away & then beyond them, a rhythm from deep meets a melody from high & are one thing as ever were—

Sun & moon coming down together, at last, all stars & more, a little tap & open wilder, another & what unnamed but kind is near, Noisy Children live throughout the Universe, nothing small or unimportant, every slightest movement cascades unknown & potent perpetually

my love is roses when she
smiles, sugar she sings,
higher when she dreams,

a moment now it's a huge dance, a tribal frenzied storm, not a place or time but a way, how kindness thrusts into the raw places & immolates everything—

one moon, several, go go, a hook onto & up, up, it does not end, what could?

Everything is right, everything is wrong, passes & spreads through the crowd & into the music & yes that seems so & not, fall into the twist of sunshine & moon, laugh, you made it, there never was a doubt, never!

Happiness. I remember now.

Places disparate become one, easy & true, forgotten remembered, mysterious clarified, shattered whole, what was hard is no longer, the water clean again, sleep light & happy because dreams not bogged with anguish & thwart—

words easeful among souls not begging to hide back of them, eyes straight & deep—

think! remember! everything humanly good pushes toward this liberation, a sensual intelligence neither denying life nor swallowed utterly—

where touch & meditation cross, a space of furious making, a new universe possible every moment, feel it good, raise it, raise it more—

lost to the psychedelic dream is front & back, performer & audience, these pages matter in some flaming way,

walking anywhere from & to the holyness, words like that begin to break up too, open out to the wind, the night's pull, the sky is on fire, everything is on fire!

lxiv.

My Viking happens along & greets me. I wonder where he's been.

"Always around, mate. Never far." Cryptic for a damned Viking.

So I look around for Hartlee too & there he is where I left him—long psychedelic nights with guitar & trees, fearing the worst, finding some of it funny anyway—

Benny Big Dreams? He shakes his head. "Later. Maybe!"

The Artist won't help me either—she points to canvases I cannot see, impatiently.

lxv.

Dylan trudging back to his home, how he thinks of it, the rolled-up sleeping bag, an old tired orange color, & a sack of clothes & things. Little really he would miss if stolen. Glad to see them though. His bedding will feel good around him.

No dawn yet but the night sky is diminishing color. The mushrooms are present but no longer pushing at him. He gave them everything tonight. Everything returned.

Now in several layers of clothing & zipped up in his bag, a few brief thrashes to sort out bones & muscle comfort. There. Traffic whoosh on the bridge above a kind familiar. All but a few of the camp are long since asleep. Distant snores.

The future hangs wide before him. It seems at one moment like the pages of a blank book, at another like the sea, or maybe the sky, or something else. He accepts now that people are aware of him, they care, sometimes they will advise or even urge him along. This is how the world is sometimes.

He knows Cordelia is somewhere still, that she has not forgotten him, & believes, a little, in the chance they will meet again some way. The mushrooms convinced him that he does not know all, most, hardly even some about life.

Someone turns up a radio & he hears a rock song, sad, complete in its sadness. He doesn't know it, its name or the group. But he listens. Two guitars twine through it, rhythm acoustic, electric lead. Bass drums & keyboards underneath. It ripples up slowly & washes back suddenly. The singer's voice is young, sincere, elusive:

Can you hear the silence?

I can hear it too

Can I listen to the silence?

& share it with you?

Nice words. Cordelia would like them. She said music fed her, said she liked it better than most food.

It fades, the radio moves off but the music does not go & Dylan closes his eyes deeper to stay within it. He wonders what caused it, who that singer is, who the song was for—

Sleep resembling waking dream moves in as he opens toward it—

"I can let you stay, Son, but not sell you any booze," the man says to him as around him clears. He's in a tavern, dark, wooden, fairly peopled but not too.

"I don't drink," he says softly.

The barman smiles. "Me either. Would you like to drink some iced water with me?"

Dylan nods.

"Are you OK?"

"Where is this?"

"Luna T's Cafe"

"Portland?"

Pause. "Not exactly. But don't worry. You're safe. Nobody has to leave who's in danger. We try to take care of people."

Dylan sips.

"Say, you're that actor from that TV show. **TripTown!**" says one of the boozier drinkers suddenly.

He turns slowly. "I'm not an actor."

"You look just like him. Come on!"

"Let him be," says Mr. Bob with quiet authority.

"I didn't mean nothing! I like your show! It's crazy but we watch it all the time here."

Dylan nods rather than disputing.

"But we ain't seen you on it in awhile," speaks up another drinker. "Did you quit?"

Dylan looks at Mr. Bob. He wipes the bar, spotless already, & decides. Removes his crazy colors apron & says, "Come along, Son."

"Hey! Don't take him away! We like him!" "It's a good show, kid!"

Mr. Bob the barman takes Dylan's hands & brings him through an old oaken doorway. He hears someone behind him say "Aww Jeez, he's being brought to the hippy druggies. Us boozers ain't good enough!"

The bar disappears as they pass through. Dylan breathes hard & keeps walking.

lxvi.

The space between things collapses ever more, space & time no longer ever potent illusions, it's nice really, how things can reveal, how the truth embedded funny in things can burst out.

I find myself in a locked room far, dark but my flashlight, looking over old notebooks, wondering over how the years left little else but these—

Mind flows through body flows through mind, a oneness preached foul against by gurus & cultists—what then of Art? Am I not these ragged sheaves of paper?

I've never thought answers can be found easily, that it could be held whole in a glittering cup. More like truths enough for all, unlimited, contradictory—

These notebooks I'm holding are still far, space & time not undone yet—

the mystery of the visible world looms cozy in the nuzzle of the greater invisible one—

lxvii.

A tall ship on a taller sea, balance adjusts every moment to each tip & sway, many people on board, the air is cold but dances the skin without claws—

No land anywhere as though land does not exist, never did, just this ship & its unseen path to somewhere, rise fall glide lurch—

Nobody speaks or stand too near each other, what is all this? What be? What kind of shape? Why a sky above neither dark not light?

Where was there, that other place, & the one before that, & earlier? How does this keep happening? What life, whereto?

I'm not scared, I just don't know, at the moment I feel pending but maybe just more than always—

Now something happening it's been minutes, hours, what that there? Another?

Hustle & shouts, fear or at least a lot of noise & it's a large ship too, I think, did I really see? Now I am pushed by others below deck, only the soldiers remain above to fight—

Soldiers? Fight what? Nobody protests, was this expected, is this how people are, triggers to any voice calling out “crisis! run!” I didn’t think so but here we are hustling downstairs to rooms below, shouts gone, now all is silence & crowded people pushed up together, the men with worn bearded faces, the women covered in shawls, I wonder how close they remain to the trouble above, & press along, further down—

fewer people now & something good in this, I’m tired of it, the feeling the world is a farm & we feed like pigs & stand stupidly within pens waiting for more—

I don’t feel like I’m walking but I move along, spaces open out, roads, trees, a running figure once, & later again, where bound? Is this still a ship?

How did I get here? What is this place? Why don’t people ask, demand to know! I arrived here with no answers & the only ones I ever hear involve suffering & vague reward, & people nod & take up their oars, feed silently, brood but only in dreams & sickness, & in youth—

It’s fading, what was it? How can its years go so easily? Where now? Where to?

Music. People. My friend looking at me. I think of him as a friend because he looks at me with love. He’s a person who is good at that. So I call him my friend with hope inside me.

Ah.

lxviii.

I look down & ache at it again, something not like fiction anymore, I truly don’t know what, pen swabs page with words & days go—

I write: “World boils in broken blood” & marvel at its sound & sense & disgust at any beauty come from suffering, then wonder what else could,

suffering & beauty what oppose in this world? one could say so but wonder what else missing,

Not enough to fill pages, or pass painless through the many hours, or alone care when caring’s a fine welcome thing—

Not enough to rub the world a little this way & that, loose something up but not so much a roll begins—

Not enough these notebooks & their years of cries—more, I think, more, not knowing what or how—

Boils in broken blood, maybe that’s best I can do, maybe one presses back the world how it presses first—

Weakness, a want to rave higher, to call it all to a blessed point—what? what?

Little happens but exchange of day & night—
true?

Everything happens by exchange of day & night—
better?

Not enough.

I wonder how to make a ragged sheaf matter.

How & why.

lxix.

World boils in blood, another mix, waves of rant & fist, I listen & hear other centuries last & next, speak raw to power some cry, others delude with desire for the perfection of crown,

I slap lightly the pines along my way, world boils in blood, & comics praise something big & obviously missed, crowds push spitting through the market, the sun rises for noone & everything—

Put a coin in his hand, I try this & again but how many & why, what of the well-suited blank face? I don't know worse, world boils in blood, often quietly, hid, smug, terrified,

I think how? why? what next? Praise my lover for her stretching hands & blooming mind, put a coin in his hand as we walk along, I do not explain what she already knows, world boils in blood, my dreams bang hard within to spatter our morning pillow—

Merchant wrap the stench & call it a prize to the moving crowds, world boils in blood, put a coin into his hands, this pen will try to sing into the last bed & beyond, conjure, conjure, up, up, along, cliffs from beyond above this sudden beach alone I stand, ocean here too, ocean forever, stars & waves, the sweets of that other life linger, the pains like pebbles & here they may be tossed off—

Kings sober to many centuries of boiling blood, mounds of bones, cities & empires burned down with a mad glee called God, his hand is open like his eyes, coins belong on both, he is a stench like every other hero—

What the prize? Escape? Embrace? Conquest? High spasm all night in movements, a hip thrust here, a hand dug in there, do you know how crazy all this is? Why do you hang on, do the wheezing roaring drums within hold you so beloved of your gravity & your decay?

“Hey, they’re on TV!”

“Aww, I thought our show was on!”

“It is. It’s both!”

“Look at that!”

“Our lord is fevered phantasm in a brutal race’s bestial mind! We rage for some other to sanctify our bloody biddings! Some great power we devote our sacred crimes to! Our prayers crack with the crush of skull & exhale with the iniquitous ending of the small & the weak!

“We have invented our lord & now we are ruled by this foul creation, slave to tomes of useless enigma, give us back our will to lightness & song!”

“Hush up, old man! Your friends are on TV!”

A cane swings wildly but pointedly within a heavy breath of the drinker’s head.

“Hey ya crazy loon! You wanna take it outside! Come on! I’ll give you ten reasons to lock yer yap!”

“Foul representation of a fouler entity! Four limbed fleshly curse upon this dim plane!”

Mr. Bob the barman swings around the bar to divide combatants. When the drinker rears back a knuckled intent, the barman drops him with a blow.

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker settles back. ***“Nothing remains to worship mindfully,”*** he concludes with soft-voiced fury.

The drinker’s friends help him up & all are directed to the door promptly.

“You OK?”

“No.”

“Are you hurt?”

“I am alive.”

“Yah, well, no more of that with your cane or I’ll take it from you.”

“I understand.”

“What’s wrong tonight? You’ve been coming around regular again.”

No reply.

lxx.

“Is it good, Dad?”

“Yes. It’s good.”

“What’s it like for you?”

“Like arrival.”

lxxi.

A thousand thousand years & what of any of it. Prove anything is over, or exists, or will come. Prove it! I can’t. Less seems unique to a coordinate of space & time. Pattern & repetition, kindred everywhere, the protests cry for difference or superiority, for hierarchy, for better & lesser wisdom,

leaves spilling onto the freeway, it passes low over water, talk with the sky another kind of music of rise & drop, distances there are none,

dream, music, desire, nature, causeless conjure, gourds of sacred mash how the night’s beauty will tell in endless plain

feel it, near, arrival, it feels like arrival, again, tonight—

lxxii.

I wonder when it will fall through itself, twist among itself, how can it help but, once the books seemed finite, seeking a final number, but now open endless, if I did this forever it would seem like I had & meant to—

Have I don't this forever & what is that I then? Coffeehouses swathed by vines & neon, every side a speeding carriage & away—

Accepting anew, this is what I do, what possible, what lost? What next? The next word. This.

The old books like an audience, curious, rapt, critical, hopeful—this the next,
but for them alone? I don't think so, I believe another plays his guitar likewise,
another her drawings does, some conjure, some branch, some sing, some leap, I believe there
is some kind of disparate tribe too, among the old books, & comfort for these—

When passing exhaust of days lightens awhile, such a view as this. OK. Next word. Next.
Others at it too. I miss them yet there they are, I feel them tonight, a knowing factless &
true.

The path? Back there, then. On. Else.
The map? Heat to make, up & out.
The goal? Chop wood. Eat ice cream.
The conclusion? Faceless laughter, cascading wilder.

lxxiii.

Draw in deep from other days & feel them there, within still, feel them sparkle on
the branches up & out, thousand thousand hours & more

“nomination looks less certain than just a few days ago”

“Bring that bastard & his pack down!”

“Small victories for progressive”

“Wipe my ass with their war!”

“Preparing further strategies for coming”

“Motherfuckers feel it slipping away! I do too! Some justice maybe?”

“Further erosion of civil”

“Who's ready when the war comes home? Are you gonna sit there in your puddle of
beer when they goosetep through the door?”

“Activists vow”

“Vow nothing! I'm full to my eyeballs! I'm ready to take 'em all on!”

Mr. Bob leaves the verbal fray again to check on the night's other events—Rebecca
made him promise to take off his apron & find her—

He tells the drinkers the honor system is in place. They nod respectfully. Rumor has
it Americus has a secret tabulation system for draught beer.

He's also wondering about his young friend whom he left with several smiling young
people. Guesses Rebecca will find him at some point—she's like that—

Pushes through the swinging door into nighttime beneath fullmoon starry skies, ahh
very nice, no walls at all, the trees are tall, the music is loud & lovely, Noisy Children's
driving melodies augmented by a hundred drummers or more, all is good here, Mr. Bob
tucks his apron in his back pocket & leaves toil's hours awhile, forgotten—

Rebecca comes upon him like she was waiting. She seems dressed in hide or leaves, something, her hair dressed casually in blooms, beautiful mostly in her smile as ever—
 takes his hand & they move among smilers & wild sparks, yes, all is good here—
 “I found Dylan” she says. “He’s shy.”
 Mr. Bob nods.

lxxiv.

The man standing next to him is a ruddy-faced preacher, younger than the one back in the city but just as intense & mouthy

“You want a hint? I’m going to give you one right now at this freak gathering. Listen near”

Dylan leans near & the music stops, the world falls back & gone & the preacher pulls him along from nowhere to intenser nowhere

“Mistakes are one path to God’s grace,” the words tap his cheeks alternately, “That’s one. What a man needs in this world is his captain, a book, & a boat. That’s two. Go! Do with them!”

World returns with a great sucking force & the preacher is gone & here is Rebecca, another new friend. Her smile is blossoms like Cordelia’s. With her is that other man, now without his apron.

“How are you, Son?” he asks.

Dylan, unused to talking, croaks “OK. I’m OK.”

“Fine. I’m glad to see you again.”

Dylan nods, agreeing.

“Your name is Dylan?”

Nods.

“I’m Charles. Or Chuck. Or Mr. Bob. Your choice.” His smile is good, tells Dylan more than he can process quickly.

The girl, Rebecca, takes his hand & he sees her ring, a pinkly glowing beast, a furred jewel. Cordelia would like it.

She points. “The tall man with the guitar is my father, Rich. That’s his band Noisy Children. We’re at their show.” She’s happy. This is how.

He wants to talk to them. “I’ve had a long night,” he starts. Stops. “I started in another place.”

They listen & nod. He thinks, tries to remember. “My friends got me a job. It was a surprise.” They smile. It gets a little easier. “They wanted me to live a little better. I liked where I was but they worried.”

Then what? They see his discomfort & each takes one of his hands & they walk toward the fire, the many drummers. Dylan feels all of this crawling deep inside himself, crackling sometimes, jumping, falling, lets it, lets it a little more.

He says no more but will later. This is something he likes.

A captain. A book. A boat.

Mistakes one path to God’s grace.

What else?
 Do what with them?
 What to do with any of it, the night all around & its grooves, its groans, what to do
 of it,
 between nothing & everything, respond, raise a bit, today, tomorrow,
 eyes raise up & around a bit more—
 yes, I think so, & reach however clumsy toward other souls, out & true as can be—
 Wisdom, if ever, if any, occurs among the threads & the moments, subtle, persist,
 one leaf til two til more—
 Dylan finally tires of everything & removes back to his sleeping bag under the bridge,
 the remain of this night he'll have alone & private in the world—
 No music around the camp to disturb him. Nothing. Deepest sleeping hours.
 Noisy Children happy because blown wide & no audience left awaiting them
 tonight, many came along, willing, wanting to breach a perpetual sense of waiting, of next—

“David.”

“Raymond.”

“Is this any good? Who else can I ask?”

“Further, truer, find that best groove down low.”

“I’m trying.”

“Don’t just breach it, blow out the seams. Progress is hardly other than a vow not to return
 to darkness.”

“I agree. Is this how?”

“Stop asking. There’s nothing else.”

I nod.

Some remain with night’s last curls, sheen of streetlight on a tree, rain slathered across
 pavement, mute neon high & low, streaking headlights, what voices still jingle randomly—it
 comes & comes again—day’s clumsy arc, night’s smooth descent, dream’s perfect low,
 comes again, again, again—

She sketches slow & fast, several pictures, two at once, a grainy one of symbols, a smooth
 one of leaves, she lays between her pads & plays them easy & long, piano hands transformed
 by will, the moon between, the stars among,

 she plays them piano up & feel it gallop, follow, not a trail from your eyes onward,
 more twist upward from earth & writhe to the blinks & curls known & none—

 Dylan dreams her playing her two pads & finds warmth, nearly words, music, a
 touch, a remembrance

 he finds comfort & he sleeps more deeply, leaving his mushroom companions til
 another time, surely there’ll be—

 leaves all but the least fragment of his named soul & his rest bears him new with the
 next sun—

lxxv.

John enters the White Woods & knows not what is. He moves slowly, testing all his senses for absence or confusion. Things feel off but neither absent nor confused. Yet.

His body is damp with effort & hours into his trek he wearies but fear thrashes him onward. Does this end? When will the colors return, & dark & light reverse back?

No animals, not a movement of anything. No moon, just black holes in a white sky.

Does anyone or anything watch him? How?

Slow down. Count your breaths. There! Slow. Fear eats blindly but most often without teeth.

His pace slows. He stops. There. Steady. A humming! Nothing like that belong in empty woods.

Retreat, no. Listen better. It's not strong in every direction.

Listen. Shhh.

Ahh. Now.

No time here, or at least absence of that sense of movement. What's here is, perpetually. Space, too, contains no here & there, no differentiation.

How trippy, but et no substance, this journey cannot be traced to or from—

A prison? Again, no time no space. no outside to be denied, nor time, even a lifetime, to call the term.

Breathe, relax. That works. My body is still one with me no-here

Ok then it will be my body telling my mind what to do to navigate here—how to walk with thoughts—

legs say the best we can tell you is deeper or lesser, decide & it will happen
deeper

a metallic sensation painful fucking hurts!

lesser! fuck! lesser!

OK—but what the fuck?

legs say you exposed too much—think thinner, flatter, less exposed—ready?

go—OK—it's working—the pain is present but less—

trees are greater—whiter too? nearly beyond white—is that possible? the humming is more music now, rhythm & melody both—

legs say this will be endless unless you do more—

what then?

think more—think what's already here—what you already see—no paradox—just more visible presence—

lxxvi.

What could burble from a tired view, what waits to set in & play up its point? What does daylight guard, what the odd hustle without, pending a moment?

Begin. Begin slower if need be. Clutch whatever.

If it won't work tonight it may another——will—believe—any way—

He finds when he relaxes that he walks within her again & not a dream & not an hallucination, this is truly who he is, how he is, this is his heart's rendering of the world
 her voice about him like the White Woods had been, her touch propelling him now
 that his body & mind have agreed & cooperate
 regret comes spiky not like rain falling but every where & every direction & it does
 not end but he wills slower & so it slows
 is she why? that's too simple—there is no center—even next isn't a decent explain
 but still he walks within her & not a dream nor a dupe
 OK—well—then?
 She's talking but far away, he approaches gasping for the sense of her words “love me
 more in absence than you did most of our time together” closer & closer now clinging to her
 wrist as she wipes a table,

“YOU WERE ALWAYS LEANING FORWARD”

now he pulls back from her uttered mountains of noise “like men you were most interested
 in possession” pulls back further sees she is in a hair salon & it is dusky evening, she is alone.

Marie. The one who led him to quit that world . . . wherever it is now. She'd loved
 him with full surrender & now hated him as only defense. How the world works most times.

He closes off his vision to concentrate, to liquefy, vaporize, fill that salon & touch
 her, outwardly she does not respond, just wants to go home, forget that damned TV show
 that had reminded her of him, but within she responds, perks, stiffens,

“You can't be here like this”

“Why not?”

“It's not possible. I'm awake.”

“You are?”

“You come in dreams but never so directly. Mostly dreams forgotten. I am defended
 against you & know how to route you out quickly.”

“But today?”

“There was a TV program & there you were. I didn't know how. I watched for
 hours. I just kept watching. The show must have ended, I've seen it before. It's an hour,
 most times. I watched it all night. I haven't slept.”

“And now?”

"This is sabotage! This is not what I want!"

"You haven't told me to leave."

"I want to know why you came & what you want."

"I don't know."

Silence. "Then go now."

"I didn't know I was coming. I saw the TV show too, & I went out & I haven't gone back. I don't know where I am now, exactly."

Pause. "Are you in trouble?"

"I don't know."

"I owe you nothing."

"Yes."

"Go."

"Do you really mean that?"

"Come back as a man not a mist."

"Why?"

"That's for you to risk."

"Is there any good answer between us?"

"I don't know"

"I'll go now."

"Don't come again at all unless you are serious."

The woods are dark, he's back in his body. What was that? What the **fuck** was that?

He checks his bag. Checks himself. Both OK. The woods are quiet but they *are* woods.

He looks around & finds nothing human in evidence. Not even a trail. How did he get here?

The high moon gives him some light to raise camp by. His tent pops into place, his things go within with his sleeping bag & pillow.

No sleep though. Not even close. He wonders how close he is to any of Boss Dogg's secrets. Are there tripwires he's luckily missed? Cameras up above he can't see?

A campfire would be a bad idea. Better to bundle up layered thickly. It's not too cold.

No creatures. Not even distant noises. A howl or a hoot would give him much reassurance. A rustle.

Nothing.

A can of beans with mini hot dogs. A couple of tokes. A can of diet soda. Now some weariness.

A drift. Longer now. Crawl & stagger into tent. Zip up & then into sleeping bag. All flaps closed. Maybe there is a rustle before the next drift that carries him away,

A clock, tick tock.

But no, no tick tock.

A broken clock.

OK, check the next. No tick tock. Broken clock.

Got to get there. Where? *There*. It's dark. The city is closed. Dark. No tick tock. Broken clock.

What time is it? Got to get *there*. Middle of the night. No tick tock.

A sadness that it had to come here, that it could not go on.

He finds himself running before dawn, fleeing before he was awake to know it. Fast, faster than he can keep up for long but he does. He is terrified & doesn't know why. Doesn't know how far he'd come. He slept in his clothes, all he's got left.

lxxviii.

"Now *that* was a good episode," declares one of the less sodden drinkers at the bar. The others nod & one shakily raises a mug.

"Think he'll be back?"

"Who knows? Any other show on TV I'd say sure thing. This one? He might be back as a man, a cyclone, a purple grasshopper!"

"A chunk of lava?"

"A dancing girl's left nipple!"

Everyone cheers at that.

Mr. Bob the barman has returned but still isn't tending bar. The regulars leave him be & sort out the business of watering by themselves.

He wonders why there's even a bar anymore. Is it just for him? Sentiment. Not Soulard's style often.

"No it's not. But maybe this time."

"How long you been dry, Son?"

"Going toward four years. I dream about drinking again sometimes. Bad dreams."

"I got those for a long time. Just lingering farts from your past."

I laugh.

"It's true!" We both laugh.

Dylan reads the unfolded scrap over again, a date, a time, an address. Today. Later. Near downtown. The job his. Wash your face. Show up & smile. Easy work. You can pay off the uniform later. No worries, kid, we know this place, they take good care of people there. It will be nights for awhile, days later maybe, if you want them. Bring a radio or a book. Bring a sandwich & a can of pop. Bring the newspaper. Wear walking shoes. Don't worry.

The easy part is washing up. Bring a traveler you learn the basics: bathrooms, soup kitchens, safe places to sleep, places you can spend your hours.

But he has no watch & this bothers him. Clocks. Tick tock.

I'm going so my friends won't be disappointed. They want me to live in a room. Maybe they will visit. I'll keep going to the library. I like it there.

I like it *here* too. But I can't stay.

Dreams that keep from days long gone rarely have to do with faces—all remains now with them is shared sentiment, pretty scent in a rapid wind, but I remember private things more & wonder over this—why the places not the people? Disappointment? How all of them cared & cared & then somewhat more diffusely & then it was shared sentiment & little else—why indeed do I remember radio shows & old cemeteries & treed courtyards with ache, & the people, not so hard, I tried a poem tonight & could only get so far, saying it comes & goes, over & over, play each hour like a king, & then the next, & the next—

I tried to make it back into my past, sent a hello around but the echo was bare, was less,

Today I sat in an office feeling hours slip unfelt by, & tonight I hurt by this, & tomorrow again & I don't know how to do otherwise—how to feel in a concrete box of blinking machines, each slave to his walls & seat,

Not anger, weariness, a resolve to swim along anyway,

Reck the hardest strums &
 their awful echoes, alien
 wild through later days,
 clinging, sorrow's riped mask,
 sugared year of moments
 blah fucking blah blah blah

lxxix.

Smooth later hours more a band again though hardly back, more simply aloft, coherence in guitars & keyboards & percussion, if not five people again then more toward that—

something—tell it by its own angles & silhouettes—

Noisy Children disappeared awhile, dispersed into the beat, the flow, went, good & gone, hours or their simulacra passed, up, over, & over again, there was no band or else all was band, can it be said for sure? No.

Then as flights do there was some kind of return, along not back, nobody lands in the same place

& what happened with Luna T's faded & what had that been? Did you see that? Was it real? How did they do that? Can drugs do what they did?

Toward some weak hour the band huddles in rest.

"That was pretty good."

"Fuck yah!"

"Will it be like that every time?"

"I don't know."

Grey the drummer takes a long pull at his pitcher of stout. "We can do better."

"What do you mean?"

"We're back, aren't we? We took 'em somewhere awhile, then we brought 'em back. Here we are."

"Should we not come back?"

"You're the Artist. I just hit my skins cuz I like loud shite."

"Bollocks!"

"Don't turn Brit on me, Torment! I've got enough to deal with here."

"Grey, what are you talking about?"

He smiles. "I know all about this, mate. I had long hair once too."

"Where, your nose?"

"My band wasn't called the Motherfuckers at first."

"A new story?? Twenty-five years in the band & you have a new story."

"I saved it."

"What was it called?"

"Pasquale here has the right idea. We called it Soma UK."

"Soma?"

"Yah. Soma. All that Injun shite. Rig bleeding Veda. We drank the swill & are gods. That was Barnacle."

"Who? There was no Barnacle in your band!"

"He left. Split. Gone. Not a word. Not even a decent suicide to give us a myth to exploit."

"Soma UK?"

"It was only a few months. We sucked. Eating fungus & playing the moonlight. Balling drunken hippy chicks looking for our stash."

"Playing the moonlight? Sounds familiar."

"We weren't any *good*, Gretta-bird. Imagine doing what we do *badly*. I loved Barnacle but he didn't belong in a band."

"Why Barnacle?"

"He stuck to ya. You knew he was trouble, but he hung on & you got used to him. I hated when he left. But then I turned my mates onto the Pistols & Clash & Dolls & Stooges & we found powder & new wave shag & off we went. Never talked about it. Never looked back."

"Why tonight?"

He shakes his balding head. "Dunno. I just think we're going where he wanted to go. But Soma UK wasn't any good."

"You think we'll get there?"

"They had better get out of our way while we blow through."

Everyone laughs. It's OK the music is over for the night. They'll be back. It never *really* stops.

Someone walks up with a pipe & a smile. Another builds up the fire again. The hours continue.

lxxx.

“You left in a trippy puff last time”

“Tell me some things about me”

“Which things?”

“The important ones. The ones I need to know”

“Good or bad or all?”

“All”

She nods, craggy hash pipe held thoughtfully.

“Hope & anguish. Your dark & light gods & your hours the war. Never ends.”

“Is it that binary?”

“Pretty much. You let the world to its greys, its mysteries, but in you there’s dark & light”

“What else?”

“You think happiness is a struggle’s victory, or else a surprise gift. Not a flow, not a constant song.”

“No?”

“No. Music is your wish, trees your icons, love your guard.”

“Art?”

“Your blood.”

“Love my guard? Guide you mean?”

“No.”

“Explain?”

“Not now.”

“Art my blood? Cliché.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Long hit on hash pipe. I take my turn too. “Clichés sometimes state things best.”

“What of now?”

“Now is your latest challenge. Not the ragged singer close to the streets, which is how you see yourself. More the settled life with its own rewards.”

“I’ve been badly lonely. Yet I miss some of those nights.”

“They were years of nights.”

“What do I do?”

She starts to smoke again, then stops. “Nobody gets it all from anyone. Do better with what you keep for yourself. Treasure it a little more. Spend it a little better.”

“That’s it?”

“That’s enough for now!”

lxxxi.

Words more like treebranches more like cities war-maimed & a far-off king speaks of devilment & faithlessness—

I want to tell tonight's anguish & gesture to its well of pity, its passing music in too few hours to be fully loved—

I want to speak like kind words to a private page can mean something wider—

I want to believe that many worlds there are & they move each other subtle & blunt—

I wish for men's gods to inspire them to live like their bravest tomes preach—

I want to direct each of my pages to war's cease, beauty's spread, music's deepening, love's truths

but I control nothing, my pen leads me by my writing hand—

I look everywhere in this neon traffick'd night & nothing like answers or resolve—

Sunshine gets up on the skin & something like a language—

Trees about, pretty pretty, will you listen if I confess? Will you comfort me as always—

My pen moves of its own resolve some hours—I let it loose—hope for its flight—none else—

“Just remember what I said”

“Spare hours like gems?”

“Something of that. Every hour shines, mate.”

“So I keep trying to learn. So I think I do learn sometimes. Then a kick in the face & I know shit again.”

“Every hour shines, mate.”

“Yah. Like shoes for a buck.”

“Maybe more.”

“Eh.”

“Maybe!”

Curl in a chair & wonder at the sprawling fuck of any day's hours, careening through & hardly knowing a one of them & wishing otherwise—

“Vow better.”

“Yah.”

“No faith but in works.”

“Yah.”

“What else?”

“Not a lot.”

Dylan at his desk. So this is what it's like. A clip-on tie around his neck, a walkie-talkie in his hand. Nobody to talk to right now.

The training took a couple of hours, mostly because he didn't understand it. His boss was patient. Wrote everything down. He has a clipboard of instructions. He has a radio.

This is a new kind of alone. He agreed to this not knowing what it was. Now here he is. He brought some books & a can of cola & sandwich from that big Fred Meyer place. An apple. A candy bar.

This is a new alone. The boss was kind but left.

"You'll be fine. This is tit work. We'll pay you starting Friday. It's not the rules, we usually hold back a week's pay but you came spoke of highly by some friends of mine. They said you're clean & trying to get off the streets. You're young & polite, I can see why they like you."

But now he had left. He said the building was empty overnight, nobody worked this late.

Was this good? Could he do this?

"Vow better."

"No faith but in works."

"What else?"

"Not a lot."

A handsome blonde man named Global Wall on stage at a microphone & his speech about to begin—I don't know what he will say.

He imagines an audience not of faces but of mirrors—some plain & flat, some rippled, some wildly distorted—he is able to speak to mirrors—it satisfies him to believe that what he is saying will reflect back to him, not sink among shoulders & purses—

He misses Cordelia. How would he explain this?

It's not this work. It's me. I'm tough in some ways & a bird's wing in others. They don't think I'll mess up because it's not possible if I show up.

How could anybody not do this! They want me to sleep safe in a bed. They want me to be warm at night. They want more for me than they have.

"It's OK, Dylan."

"I don't know where you are."

"It doesn't matter. You keep some of me always. That doesn't change."

"I don't know if I'll ever know this new life."

"Practice. Some days will be good. Some won't. Hearts are sometimes tough & sometimes tremble."

"I'll fail. It will be worse when I do."

"You're tough. You'll make it."

"Where are you?"

"I'm safe. I'm OK."

"Are you . . . dead?"

"No!"

"I'll see you again."

"Sometime. But don't live by waiting. Nothing ever comes."

"Nothing?"

"Just more waiting. That's all."

"Will you stay with me tonight? Please?"

"No, Dylan. It would be worse if I did. I'm always around. You know that."

"Cordelia?"

"Who? This is the boss man calling! You OK, kid. Birdie on my shoulder told me to call & check."

"I'm OK."

"Who's Cordelia? Your honey?"

"No."

"It's OK. You can take calls. Just do the work how I trained you & wrote it down. Other than that, get through the night by any piece of mind."

"Thanks."

"Don't worry. It gets easier. You'll like having a home again & a little change in your pocket."

"Yah."

"OK, so listen. My cell is on your clipboard. Call for any reason."

"Thanks. Goodbye."

Global Wall created all around him for this hour. Tonight he is mighty, benign, expansive, he matters & urges how all matters.

"I've brought you here from the farthest places to listen for a moment. I want to infect you with these ideas & you in turn will infect others"

Dylan eats his sandwich, it's chicken salad & provolone cheese, mayo & mustard, pickle, on wheat bread. Thick & spilling out onto its waxpaper. He eats slowly, paying attention, trying & trying, chewing thoroughly, tongue giving over his attention to taste & texture—

"Some of you are visible leaders in your towns & cities. Some less visible. Each of you arrived as part of a single gesture I made, & so you each belong here. What you will do next is unknown. The future is a dark mouth of sharp teeth."

"How does the TV do that? It's two places at once & we can understand both! Some new kind of special effects! I want the kind of drugs *they're* doing!"

lxxxii.

He can't quite wake but knows he's not in his tent. Dreams like a strong tide keep pulling him from waking's shore, how do you swim to consciousness?

He knows of lucid dreaming & this isn't it. He's being held prisoner in some way by someone who can keep him nearly-but-not-quite-awake. Can & is doing it on purpose. Power, control, I own you, you are helpless.

Very well. What if he retreats deeper into dream—

He tests & there is the pain he expects & it's much worse than he recked. On a tether, then, on the least shores, held there,

well, then, sideways? That works OK but nothing changes, it's like no movement at all,

what of straight down? He tries, feels a little give but the floor beneath him is too near, freedom isn't that shallow,

up, straight up? Before the thought gestures he shoots up a human projectile up & for more moments he is free! The tentacles strain to hold him

& he lets himself be pulled back, flails against it, bestializes his mind to the primitive fury over the cage—

idle floats, & waits, unable to wake or to dream elsewhere

how long these things take to pass he doesn't know, dreams bear no necessary relation to time—

Is it Boss Dogg at the controls? Doubtful. A guard, maybe even a simple computer/drug interface, nothing terribly complex—

but how? There was a middle to this—after he tented down & before his capture—he lets his mind loosely float among a scatter of words & images, randomly returning to this issue & away again in mid-mental sentence, images half conjured—if it's indeed an automated trap he's in, there may be no release for hours, days.

He thinks of Marie, for just a nude arched back sexhigh yowling then a deep pulse within says “twist it” & so he hits her hard like he never had, hits her hard, walks out & slams the door arriving to an old wooden tavern for a night of hard booze & faceless sex with whatever raises his sniff—

looses from that & scatters severally among random thoughts, mixes this & that, wondering if everything he's trying is less than little challenge for his captor to untangle, conjures Marie again & a pretty whore & the humiliation of fucking the bitch while Marie watched

& his brother Mickey deaf & gaptoothed, died when little, fell from a barn's hayloft, sad, sadness he couldn't possibly feel he does, does hard & vast & old, gnarls in his heart, old gnarls—

returns to trying his shackles like this was the way out, scrounging his mind for a weapon, but not really, but really—

lxxxiii.

Can you tell me any new thing, truly, for I would wish it now, this new thing, the one not slapped with patience, heavy hours to the oar, an irretrievable piece to the bastards bearing the coin—

New thing? No. More of the same. Knee before the king, flash of his sweet slay some other hour, for now the knee & the thank-ye & the scrape of politeness & humiliation—

O turn that old thing up a bit—new boss, same as the old boss, kiss it smiling today, it's shit nothing in the moon, the desert, any high that matters—

“Argument inside remains, don't it, mate?”

“Yah. Like many things.”
 “They keep you from sloppiness.”
 “Yah. Lean & running.”
 “No.”
 “Fuck is what I say to it.”
 “Will you?”
 “Yah. Want it, pay for it.”
 “Easy enough!”
 “Is there a line?”
 “Not really. None you can’t cross back & forth over by the day, by the hour.”
 “Gee.”
 “Want it, pay for it.”
 “Yeah. Heard that one.”
 “Will you?”
 For my beloved, I will.

lxxxiv.

After a week of guarding an empty building, Dylan gets his check in the morning & walks home. One of his security guard friends is waiting with cash equal to the check. Dylan signs it over & gets his cash. Looks at it

“Enough to pay your weekly rent here & some for food & a little fun maybe.”

“Yah. Thank you.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. You helped me a lot.”

“We like you. Everyone should get a hand when they’re crawling & young.”

Dylan nods & goes inside to pay the landlady, a queer duckling running for office, the pile of posters in the foyer claim.

His friend is still on the steps, so he steps outside again.

“You OK?”

“Yah.”

“It’s not easy. Work can be hard, even when you’re not cracking boulders.”

Dylan nods.

“You gonna stick with it? You don’t want to be back on the streets, do you?”

Silence.

“Listen, I got an idea. Why don’t you get the Greyhound & take a little trip this weekend.” Pulls out a thickness of bills & hands Dylan about a hundred bucks. “Pay me back later.”

“No. I can’t. Where?”

“Go see the ocean. I mean it. I’ll walk you there & set it up.”

“Would you come?”

“No. I want you to do this on your own.”

“That’s all I do anymore.”

“This is different. You’re going to see something. It’s big & magical. I can’t tell you about it right. Come on!”

Dylan goes with his friend after grabbing his bag, with an extra shirt, & some of his little mushrooms.

lxxxv.

Come back to the dingy cafeteria, its bad food, its lowly comfort.

Wondering at the perpetual vagabond in me, the dirt-dog, running the streets, hurting obscurely & studying this for any importance it might bear, any little importance I should know & keep.

I’ve been writing these stories most of my life, lives, life after life, they connect among them, trace through in ways I treasure & cannot quite know—

The street in me, the coffeehouse, the late high desperate nights I do not eschew—they keep fresh in me because little else piles to their worth—

I come to sorryass joints like these to meet my ghosts & bear wisps of them away with me—to remember close no matter the years—

reach back through the tentacles & manacles to flashes of sweetness, sugar high moments among the sad murk—

Nobody knows. I look at others & do not know. I wish to think it otherwise but rarely do—

The hours run out on this & onto my cleaner ones, live warmth, some kindness & protection—

Fierce flavors of all my years blend arching, careening, perpetual—

lxxxvi.

“Pipe?”

I take it & welcome the smoke-shaped spirits within, feel words & images jostle loose, feel the depths crackle

“The murk sing?”

“yah”

“heh. You so want to word the wordless, don’t you?”

“Why else bother to try?”

“Think you can do it perpetually?”

“I dunno.”

“But you won’t stop.”

“No. There’s always more to say.”

“Or bottle up the old anew?”

“Yah. Maybe.”

“How long have we been discussing this?”

“At least a decade. Never stops being interesting.”

“For long.”

"No. It renews, gets strange & luring again."

Nods, smokes, spirits smoky fill the room.

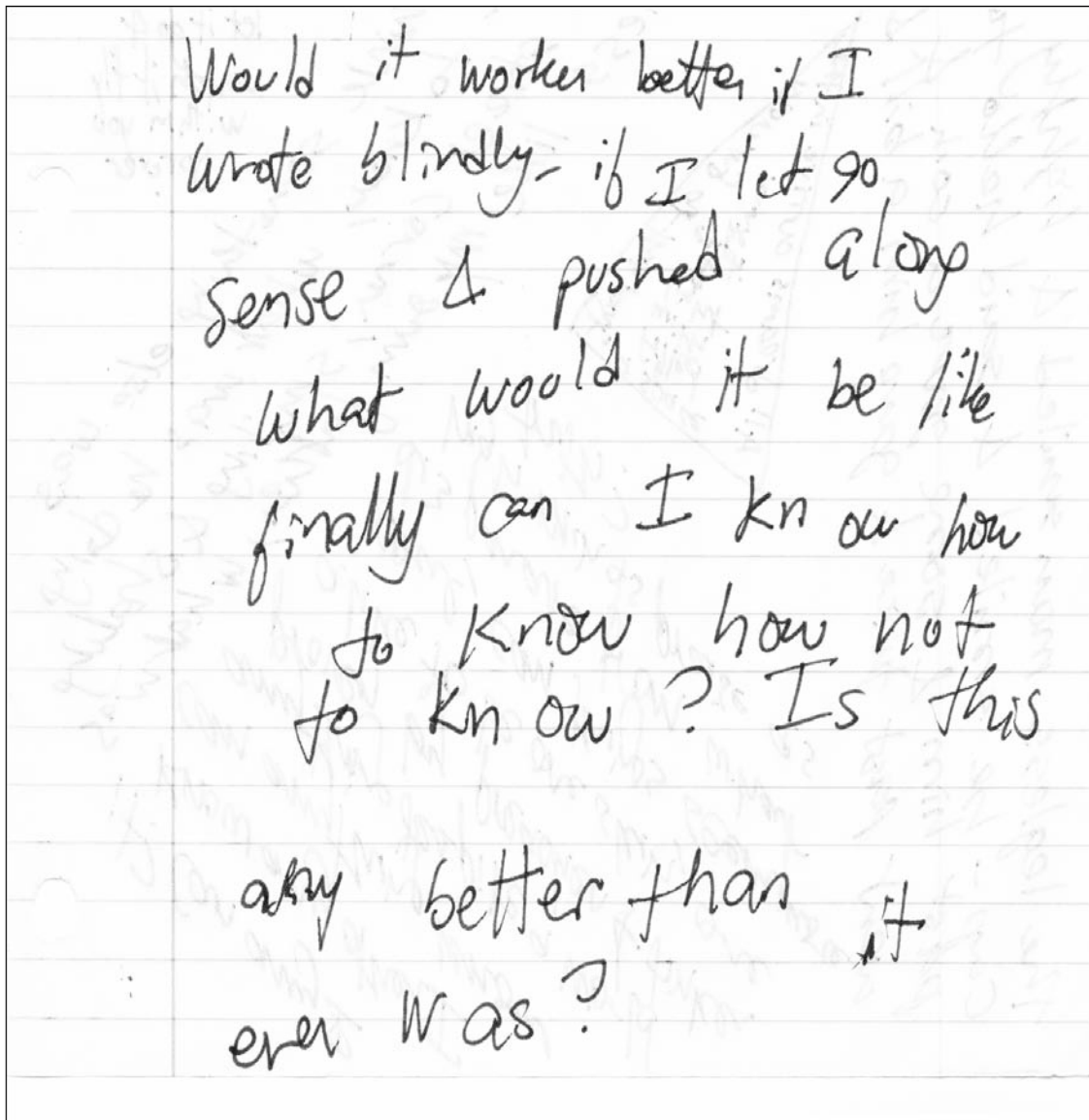
"What else?"

"More of the same, changing over days & years."

"What to do?"

"Tend. That's how it works best."

Smoke & harder. Lean on the night, push it to its best kind of reveal, comes slow then wild



[illegible]

A breath, & a day or two, & along. A book should live by its mystery, seek to trouble, struggle, shine, collapse, become new & new again as sheaf thicks—

What else? No answers. The preacher will mouth a few, but step out in the shine & the bowing & nods do not scrape the light, explain it, comfort it, further it, little, little, less—

Well, then, cry for next? What of it? What matter at all? The world proceeds, or whatever verb you like. Nothing writ here slows or alters that.

I can remember such disparate, close-resembling days & nights spent above these pages—at a poor folks joint one hot summer—at a nocturnal courtyard many years—in a scruffy cafe armchair for a dark endearing stretch—

Toward what end, these pages? Their own, I suppose. One needs more than the lingual magick; one must wear the armor, ride beneath the flag, ever owe a knee to some face or other—these pages are free because they gain nor lose the world nothing while being so much to me—

is there anything of new truth in this? I don't know. I do not feel cower or want while this engaged. The far treed vista of my window's view seems allie, the milky clouds above, the low hum of this cafeteria, an occasional bang of some busy worker—

I remember: No way out but through.

Happiness simply in ink kissing the page.

The wish to be other & all, sometimes, to know another's eyes & wishes—

To understand beyond empathy—to know the alien within this familiar ground & that dull-colored room—

To beg Mystery: seize me! Make me a cloud, a pine tree, a soft gasping applause!

More than possession or twain-now-one-more! To feel something I cannot feel, be something I cannot be, & return—

To be surprised again—stand foreign & innocent & wondering—not by sickness or tragedy—by something I cannot now name—

I wonder: is this just want for novel sensation? Are my ideas this meager? Would flying an airplane or holding my own child be enough?

I don't know. Are these the outer bounds of familiar society's thoughts? What truly restrains me?

Is it loss I feel or the rawness of growth?

I wish for my writing to run ahead of me, leading me unknown thither.

Power or release?

What will bring the hills into view again? What beyond old ideas of hills?

Yes, maybe, or perhaps something else—freedom where cuffs & coins are farthest away—whatever these pages, they are mine & they owe none to anyone—their raise & fall are their own—

I watched three cops surround a man, search him, talk to him, cuff him, remove his possessions to a sack, into a car & away he was taken—& the busy street did not slow—hardly noticed—

It wasn't me—I sat safe in a poor folks grease joint & watched—terrified—why? It wasn't me—but it was him—his day, his path, his intent, his will—all done—this took place & was over—I see the spot still, street corner, 3 cops & a ragged man, surrounded & taken—& nothing explains anything—the hours have passed—he is in a cage—he is a photograph & a number & paperwork—what of his cat, his houseplants, his path, his will?

I have no answers, few & less, none, worse. I write here out of wordless compulsion toward pen on paper.

What is it? Tomorrow me, or you, or someone, many, everywhere. A bullet, a sickness, a word, something & then all new—sitting in a cage, unwatered plant, that next thought unfinished because surrounded & no will, no day, no path—

Safety, protection, faith?

Someone kneeled & no help anywhere—someone dancing eyes closed & will it ever end, pain or joy, imagine one & ask: will it ever end—come on, dream a body not your own, eyes not your face, heart some other's within, come on, imagine it, his god, her yearn, tree's burst, fish's new-made eggs, swarms of suns a million years' shine ago—

Open out, out, do it, not you or me, nameless, whatever, potent about, feel it but no name, again, no name—none—

here it's coming—right now—toward you—again & more—now so intense burst all is not burst enough—now mellow low, where, come back, here, now, me, come back, oh, here again—



To be continued in Cenacle | 66 | October 2008



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Progressive Political Talk



MP: VV

Judih Haggai



*There are bombs, there are victims of brainwash, there are mourners,
wounded, there are sounds that do not cease*

ugly sometimes
ugly relentlessly ugly sometimes
mind can't see over the smoke
head bombarded with blasts of rocketfire
eyes see worse than eyes can stand

& over there in a soundproof room
sipping espressos, cocktails, lies
it's so sweet, life's beautiful, fighting over the tip
life's good, endless paychecks doing endless jobs
life's waiting like a ripe olive on an ancient tree
always bearing fruit, a bowlful of promises

but back here it's ugly
ugly with more to come

led zeppelin squeals 60s hope
but it's goddamn ugly

Alas my love

i remember the night i said, screw it all
 and ended up pregnant
 that night culminated in a never-ending continuum
 you

today, 13
 a number of luck, superstition, non-counted storeys
 you have arrived at a floor in a skyscraper
 reaching beyond my view

you who've perfected the art of eye-rolling
 eyelids that could lift tanks
 gracefully gliding into teen age
 cooler, more cynical than mama me

a beautiful evolving force
 determined to be born
 wide-eyed from the start
 observing, repairing, comparing

soft cheeks upon the universe
 ready for the blows and barbs of circumstance
 relaxing amidst the mayhem
 searching for equilibrium

you, a survivor in nonchalance
 what's a bomb alert when "Artur" is about to air
 under the piano keys and out just in time
 the beautiful Zo, magnificent sublime.

I wanna be a big time New York writer

i wanna be a big time
new york writer
i wanna sit and drink coffee
and jitter all day
i wanna coin phrases
that are quoted
and find myself on a t-shirt
i wanna have an espresso named
for me
i wanna re-write metaphors
and have rumi consider my words
i wanna see the flag of big time judih'isms
i wanna be the biggest fat earthling wordster
that earth has ever fed
i wanna be so chunky
that my corpse will satisfy thesauri
i wanna have a dictionary built for me
i wanna be buried in a pile of shredded poems
i wanna be a big time one liner
made into a series
don't want much
just wanna be
big

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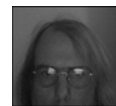
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Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from the Northwest

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), and resumed after a long absence in issue 59 (October 2006). It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Manifestation Project

May 3, 2008
Portland, Oregon

From *Labyrinthine* [a new fiction]

“Walking city streets tonight with an idea, maybe a better recent idea, it may be folded up a few times, & come out slowly—

“In recent year, LSD & similar substances have been referred to, more commonly than psychedelics, as entheogens. Generating, causing, compelling the God within.

“But what of other approaches than one that is God-centered? What of an approach which does not place spirituality foremost? What of dropping acid not to see Godd or be Godd or know Godd.

“Neither an atheist nor agnostic approach either. One that works the landscape of realities without reference to a creator, a beginning from which all comes & an ending toward which all is tending?

“Always, ever, time a tool that may also be a trick—

“Psychedelic means mind- or soul-manifesting. Use of psychedelics brings out which is within, stuck there, or untapped, or perhaps even unknown.

“That said, there becomes more to work with, & here something happens. Dreams, desires, Art, each can be seen as materials to work with. Dream. Eros. Nature. Art. Magick. Psychedelia.

“Once out, manifest, the world is changed a little, is a little more. Or, conversely, if one dives into dreaming more, the within is what changes, even before manifesting.

“I began writing 34 years ago, just now, crossed the midnight line into my anniversary, May 4, & how I viewed Art has shifted many times. I had youth’s ideas of fame, of being like the writers whose books I loved.

“It was more than 20 years ago I began to shift my thoughts, still a young man, still unknowing & yet believing I *could* know, & that knowing would bring me something. But I’d sent out my poems to magazines & got back form letter rejection slips, or sales

brochures, or nothing. It took time from writing to beg this attention. Didn't seem worth it—

“It was about 10 years ago I took writing classes & this didn't work out either. I showed up with a different set of ideas from others. I didn't want my work treated like half-formed clay, but my ideas to be confronted, & in turn to confront others their ideas. Three months & I was out of that.

“I was already by then full of my own ideas, I'd do it myself, publish my own works on my own dime, publish others' works too. Subvert assumptions & pathways both.

“So I've long published all my work this way, in various forms, & found others to support in this way too.

“An yet—ideas have pecked at me that there's more, that I've not finished my path, steps along, but there's more.

“Much more. How do I meaningfully connect these various ideas? Art/Nature/Psychedelia/Nature/Eros/Magick?

“So I nip again & again around this idea of *manifestation*. Being mortal, bodied, & working with it more & more varied. Not believing mortal life is beginning or end, but neither proclaiming what else. Disputing time as framework or guide, calling it tool & trying to live this.

“Manifestation, bring what is *within*, *out*. Diving in deeper to return to surface with more.

“Even more, dispute the legitimacy of within/without dichotomy. All is many, all is one... not enough... one is one, many is many, all is all... work perspective loose of where it limits, where it obscures.”



MP: VV

May 6, 2008
Portland, Oregon

It's called "Manifestation Project" & I think it began last Saturday in *Labyrinthine—Many Musics*, III, i, is working into it, as of last night, slowly—& JG meeting will definitely be a part of it too—

A camera—a piece of chalk—a stamped envelope—a short set of "instructions"

Manifestation Project is my idea that we are here to manifest—that all manifests but humans have a unique way of doing this, as individuals & as a race—not better than other creatures & creations—but a human way—

It is possible to manifest more & less idiosyncratically—possible to resemble others in following set ways, familiar paths—or to go further—I'd say that those who go further make a deep impression of one kind of another—bigger pebble in a pond, longer ripples—larger wave, whatever—

I was taught in a college comp class many years ago not to use clichéd phrases in my writing—this dictate changed my writing—maybe my thinking entirely—how to think one's own thoughts—how to know what one's own thoughts are or might be—where to start?

1. *Doubt any person's absolute certainty or proclamation of "truth"*
2. *Heed what impacts—thoughts, emotions, impressions of a mental or physical kind*
3. *Dreams are strangely useful, if engaged more than casually*
4. *No human desire can absolutely be called deviant or perverse until any kind of a standard can be proven to have existed among all persons at all times in all places*
5. *The visible is not all; the unseen coaxes, & eludes*
6. *Nature is neither wholly other nor wholly at one with humanity. Nature is not at one with itself.*
7. *Art is available to all, a gift already present.*

Even saying all this, maybe, is too much.

I don't believe what I see or experience or a single life itself is all, yet I don't know what to do with this. While this person, all sorts of constraints seem present. Traps, pitfalls, lessening numbers of choices.

I look around & I see grossly familiar behavior. I don't hear new ideas or see anything that is very strange or novel. I wouldn't know how to do something profoundly original. At best I am trying to work with what I have, push my patch outward.

My plain knowledge of the world pathetic. I know little, I know how to do little, I have

experienced little.

I'm only bugged, not really progressing at all that much. Dissatisfaction is not progress, is not profound or meaningful.

With so many possibilities, how to choose among them anyway? If you can't see everywhere & always, be every kind of experience, know every kind of person's life—

Manifestation becomes learning better one's own thread through the maze—not any other's—

part of the nature of my thread is the encourage others through collaboration—which is why I do Scriptor Press as I do—

For this to be a meaningful project, I have to find that collaborative ground to work with others, open my borders continuously to it—

the common ground will be artistic but I swear that's not all—it could be else—nature, magick—but then I keep thinking “manifestation” & wonder what I'm talking about—

if one manifests from cradle to grave—one way or another—maybe the question is how conscious is this manifestation—how far is it pushed? How much is one externally molded versus how much one does whether with or against those pressures?

I really fucking *try*—this is *trying*—

I wish I felt I did it better other than my pleasure within notebooks—so much I don't do, don't know, fear—

Just more questions & discontented groping awhile—

but the cams/chalk idea *is* a good one—



MP: KS

May 13, 2008
Portland, Oregon

My enemy is bastards within—collectively the Beast—enemy? Maybe that's wrong—I don't know what the Beast is—but the word conjures up a presence I feel—a bodiless mass capable of affecting mental & physical reality—

The Beast is me, is the world, God not as man-shaped but as world-shaped—yet not good nor bad but what said so by some soul at some hour—

Manifest—here to manifest—all here to manifest—not a purpose but what is, what happens—what next in glimpse, guesses, clues at best—

What then? How does this help? What guidance, what path?

Beast cares much, little, gives no fuck—

In a way I am grappling the deeply rooted human idea of mortality, of time as linear & one's fate the ground one year or another—

I believe & don't believe—that is, I reckon what I know yet call it incomplete & thus possibly inaccurate—

I dispute without an answer of my own—



MP: RS

May 17, 2008
Portland, Oregon

Manifest

What won't come is music half-called,
distracted, hungry hours, sunk in the province
of men. Lights, simmering smells, bread & stew.
Lure, of wine & silk. Someone nods & says
we're mapping beauty, a hour nearer, a formula,
derived of striplings' coos & closely tuned
compass. More smoke, distraction's distraction.
Maybe the potion drunk an hour ago will able save the next.

Music half-called rings back in blind cries &
smoking metal. Sentiments & easy lusts.
Mapping beauty? another says. We can't feed
ourselves & save the trees alike. What beauty
in a hungry child or a burnt acre? Legions
of men will be needed, maybe more than all
this world holds. Legions of men & centuries
of days before anything known, or we even begin.

Music, I call you now, from what I know
& much the rest, I call you now, music,
where you tend I will follow, what you
know I will believe. By star's light &
dream glow will I map beauty, in songs
to manifest, music, I call to you now.
Each drift on his breeze, one wind, many winds,
one rhythm, one melody, many musics, hear my vow.

The option to feeling too much, & in too many contradictions, is to feel little, or numbness.

I could not write, I could not make Art if I did not feel, did not want, did not remember.

But I get buckled & overwhelmed. Asked to decide important particulars when I have no perspective, no detachment.

I believe men can be decent if given the option & not keep hungering. A hungry soul is least decent to all. Men can be decent if they are fed & not charged their will for it. If I'm not so hungry I can allow myself to breathe & look around. If I look around, I will like & dislike what I see. Some to defend, some to renew, & I will disagree with other men. Am I, are we permitted to live side by side & disagree? May we hear different musics, yearn each after his own peaceful & excited hour? Nothing really can disallow this yet it seems we erect institutions & moral edifices to try. Why not each man to his own ideas & no harm to any other? Given room, some hours to think, we will group together again. Why the lack of trust this will happen, or what it might resemble?



MP: RS

May 25, 2008
Portland, Oregon

Passing Water

Sing the hours true & know the hunger
is bound in breathing itself, its walls,
beams, what girds underneath. Breeze moves
each & all, one wind, many, & rains
fall with the ceaseless questions & some
answer. Want born, roots, thus musics bloom.

Next hill may show whatever the burning
smell in the air, or within heart's bluest
scent itself, or where bound world's greater
arc half risen. Sing the hours true,
chop wood, carry water, reck every hour's
pulse of promise & ache, what stays, what going.

Ferment & strew, drifting lash on a curved
warmth, news of today's annihilation in
god's praise. Crack the wish to notice newly,
the long remembered page's lean wisdom,
dream's luring distant treeline. Every heart blows
through empty fields with obscure intent.

World manifests in you for its own reasons,
many, & none at all.

May 30, 2008
Portland, Oregon

Penury

World evolves an hour to a train's slow
through grassland carrying new dead,
to a long-awaited kiss in rainy light.
Music half-called, deep hungry words,
clear dreams of a dying man. A soldier
cursing the strange land's heat, his own sad blood.

What to do next when the wind &
the lightning & the rainbow & the shutting
door? Any of it. What to do next?
Say the way is dis-illusion, call world
an effect, crack that wish to notice
newly? Manifest. Shit is beautiful too.

Look onto new years, their clustered
seeds, unmet faces, chances brambled
in mystery. Eternals touched in finishing
the song, & crawling the dust. Look back,
bravely, what spillt, what gone, calmly,
what lingers & what still it seeks through you.



MP: KS

June 8, 2008
Portland, Oregon

Clean

Leaves everywhere shake & I understand:
I know nothing.
Trees above drink of earth & shine alike:
I am nobody.
Human paths through hills & bushes decaying
the moment the pick draws away:
This hour is a gift to all & my sadness
is the struggle to share.

What answer is a tapping in our cells,
a deep rhythm, source of knowing &
nothing, move nearer, no why, move
on, sing, trust.

What answer in godless hands that
can shape dust to bullet & thus back
again, or shape dust to a prayer of thanks,
manifest a star in every seeking eye.

Leaves are shaking harder now, everywhere,
a language of both knowing & nothing,
a pickless path, this hour's gift both
spent & unspending. Move nearer
the deep rhythm, sing, trust, move on.
No why & there never was.

June 24, 2008
Portland, Oregon

I've been working on this Manifest Project since 5/3/08, it has rooted in my fiction, in my poetry, & in the newly revived Jellicle Literary Guild. Now it runs by image & word through *Cenacle 65*. Nearly two months on this project & unsure of it still.

Call these two months—from 5/3/08 when I happened into the idea first while playing a lecture by Marlene Dobkin De Rios on my radio show, to 6/28/08, when the Jellicle Guild will meet, & *Cenacle 65* will debut, & the Manifest Project camera-&-chalk idea will be viewed in full bloom—when Jellicle Guild members of old will be represented “by proxy” in the form of new members reading what they have requested—thus manifesting through distance—a beginning, a first phase—something to review & consider this summer—what it meant, many meanings—what could possibly continue by its name—

We are here & we manifest each uniquely whether that can validly be called purpose or not. I push this general idea a bit further, by challenge, by argument, & say each of us journeys life to manifest better, using, *plundering* the materials of our accumulating life—memories, experiences, knowledge—to make better days for one & all. *One and all*.

I say life can accumulate mindlessly or purposefully. Pains & ecstasies may be used again & again; the varied stuffs of our lives can be recycled new, brought to the fore not for sentiment's dull, easy hour, but for this day's gain, & the morrow, & the morrow. What passes, what is lost, need not own a person nor need it be belittled or disrespected in this new use, re-imagining. Imaginal space is where this work best happens, no limits, fears, joys, wide open, *all wide open*.





MP: VV

Joseph Ciccone*Sleepwalk*

This is the time for evading landmines,
and the quake and shake of steaming sky.

I see a bed without it's frame and armour thrown atop it,
sleepless for quite some time.

He who has not braved these lyrical tides,
and who has not yet met the note to the word

falls among the many, and dies,
his art like a fruit skin browning inside.

Xylephones and bow-tied servants wait,
their telegraph machines locked in stone tombs.

Their past and our present are on a collision course.
Friend, spare me the story, and the stench of hippie drums.

Let me meet the morning's exhaustion on the night shift,
making a run at it; one poem that's earned it's place.

Boredom Vaccine

*"I would be thrilled once again by mud and jelly candy.
I would digest volumes of dust."*

—Joe Ciccone, from the epigraph to the poem, "Boredom Vaccine."

Eat a penny keep a penny find brains in the sides of airplanes wet with rain great names like
sounds of pain down hallways that hide their mirrors amidst solid works that were once only
numbers set to music played through strings whose notes we cannot fathom while birds turn
to telephone wires which turn into rivers then bridges and at last cities that go on for years
beneath their oceans of sky whose wheels are burning in their engines.

We push god further into the corner.

This Train

Terrified,
balancing on one rail,
in the blanket heat I pretended to be young.

The day moved forward, the tracks walked on.
From someplace outside of me I felt a new fear rise up and take hold.

She throttled down at exactly 5:09,
her air horn splintering the day in two, singing ghostlike,
Goodbye New Jersey.
Erie waited somewhere in the night.

It was simple:
Horror was the whistle, and death,
the engineer.

A bony arm dangled from the cab window.
This is *his* road.
I covered my ears, buttoned my eyes, and turned away scared.

Looking up I saw the locomotive drive into its distance,
like a needle down a wound of track, stitching the split day together,
for what it's worth.



MP: RS



D.M. Turner

Psychedelic Reality: CydelikSpace

from *The Essential Psychedelic Guide*, 1994

There exists a state which I will call “CydelikSpace,” that I have visited numerous times through the use of psychedelics. CydelikSpace has correlations to the digital world of “cyberspace” described in William Gibson’s novels. However, CydelikSpace is not a fictional dimension. It is accessible now, and even appears to be the underlying reality behind all existence. It is of this state that one becomes aware, to a greater or lesser degree, during deep psychedelic experiences, and any other mystical or spiritual experience.

CydelikSpace is vast. It appears to contain all matter and energy in all of its manifestations since the beginning of time. This state also contains thought. In fact, it may be *thought* that gives birth to matter, since experience of CydelikSpace supports the notion that the manifest universe is a construct of consciousness, and not the other way around.

While in this state I have experienced in lucid detail, what seems to be every thought that has been formulated in my mind throughout my entire lifetime, as well as each perspective through which I’ve viewed life, and each experience I have had. I have seen my entire life laid out in suspension before me, and I could wander through my previous perspectives as a detached observer. I could view my life through four dimensions, easily recalling in full detail perspectives and perceptions back through early childhood. I could see the development throughout my life, of ideas, identity, beliefs, coincidences, relations, and limitations.

These were seen with the precision of someone analyzing graph charts displaying data, yet with full emotional connection. It is said that when one is about to die, their entire life flashes before their eyes. While under the influence of psychedelics this flash has lasted for hours, and allowed for reflection, devoid of panic, anxiety, attachment, or fear.

Not only is CydelikSpace a complete depository of my own life’s perceptions, it similarly contains all thoughts and experiences of every human, animal, plant, and molecular life form that has existed in the universe since time began, including the life experience of individual cells and galactic star systems. Other lives can be experienced with almost as much detail as one’s own, down to a child’s wonder upon first feeling dew on the morning grass, the trace of lipstick left on your lips after kissing a lover whom you’ve never before met, or a child’s first impression of a pattern on clothing, seen while playing at nursery school, in a building too modern to have existed during your own childhood. These vivid impressions can be much more extraordinary!; being in an extraterrestrial body while making

love and enjoying the sensations perceived through a much finer tactile sense than exists in humans, or the experience of a planet's soul over millions of years as different groups of plants evolve, flourish, and give way to their successors upon its surface.

When in CydelikSpace it is clear that you and I are not two. CydelikSpace exists, and the detailed dreams of our separate lives are entirely contained within it.

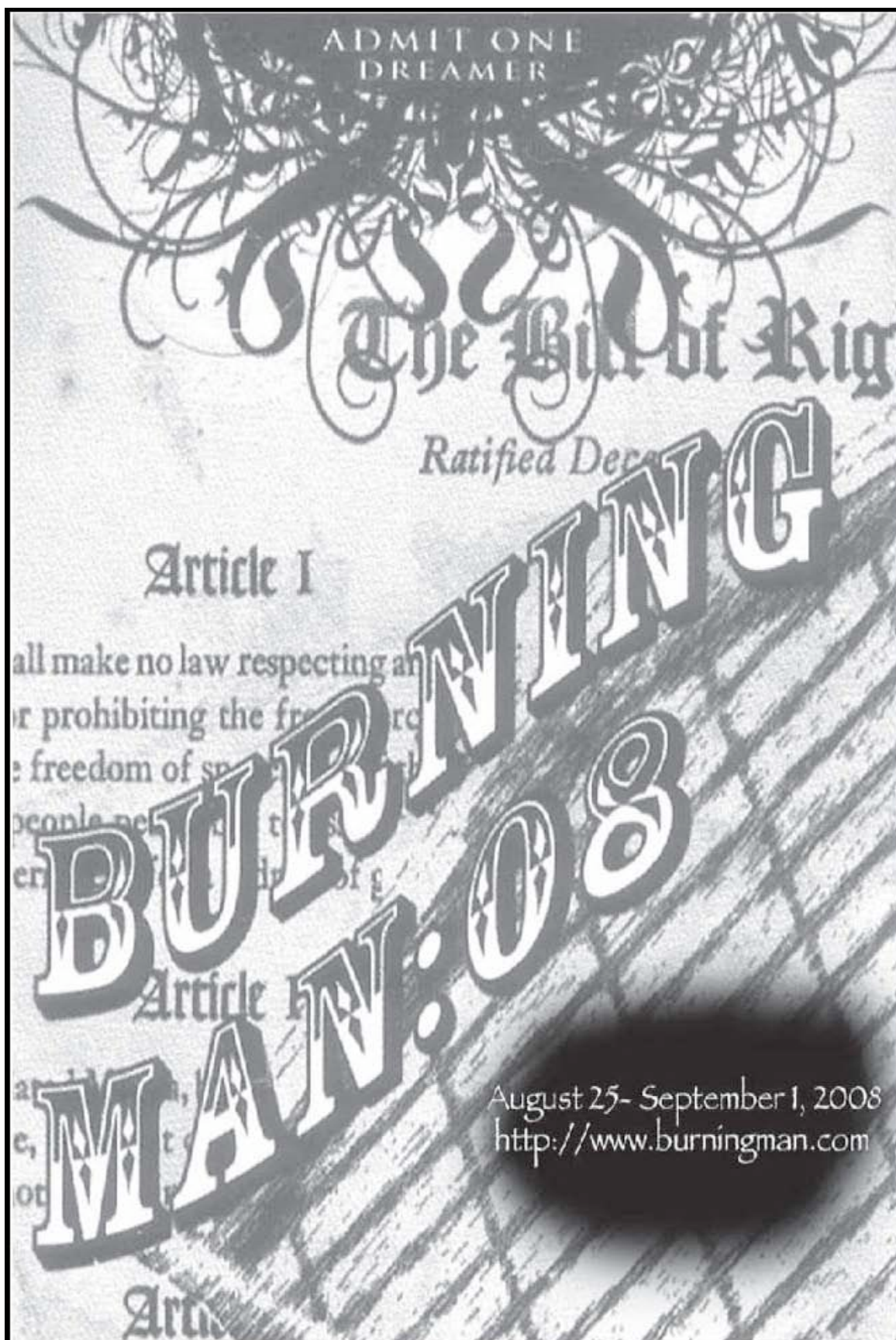
But this entire storehouse of universal experience is but a fraction of CydelikSpace's magnitude. It also contains all thoughts which did not occur but could have, and each variation of experience that did not take place. The thoughts that have passed through one's mind, the actions taken, and the experiences one has

had are but one series of occurrences. The possible thoughts, actions, and experiences that did not manifest in one's life are infinite, and branch out endlessly. An artist's marks upon a canvas are but one rendering of the multitude of visions held inside the head, and CydelikSpace additionally contains innumerable visions that the artist never dreamed in the wildest fits of imagination.

Occasionally I've experienced events while in CydelikSpace that later manifested in consensus reality. One can also experience events that happened in a time and place where they were not present, and find that these events actually occurred. This is not to say that all experiences in CydelikSpace have parallels in consensus reality. Only a very small percent do. This can be compared to dreams. Almost everyone has had a few dreams that were precognitive, or somehow paranormal, but it is only one in a great number. The same generally holds true for paranormal psychedelic experiences. However, it has been stated that many shamans in the Amazonian regions have effectively mastered this ability to enter the psychedelic universe, and view future or past events from the lives of those in their community.

In *The Holotropic Mind* Stan Grof suggests "As individual human beings we are not isolated and insignificant Newtonian entities; rather, as integral fields of the holomovement (CydelikSpace) each of us is also a microcosm that reflects the macrocosm. If this is true, then we each hold the potential for having direct and immediate experiential access to virtually every aspect of the universe, extending our capacities well beyond the reach of our senses."

Through his observation of thousands of psychedelic sessions, as well as sessions involving other means of entering into "nonordinary states of consciousness," Grof has put together a very thorough collection of information to confirm that events and experiences of the type I describe here are common occurrences for the majority of psychedelic users. He argues that the indisputable validity of these experiences calls for a new model and understanding of ourselves, our minds, and the manifest universe. In summarizing his observations Grof says "I am now convinced that our individual consciousnesses connect us not only with our immediate environment and with various periods of our own past, but also with events that are far beyond the reach of our physical senses, extending into other historical times, into nature, and into the cosmos . . . we can re-experience episodes that took place when we were fetuses in our mothers' wombs . . . On occasion we can reach far back in time and witness sequences from the lives of our human and animal ancestors . . . We can transcend time and space, cross boundaries separating us from various animal



species, experience processes in the botanical kingdom and in the inorganic world, and even explore mythological and other realities that we previously did not know existed.”

In my experiences I’ve found that CydelikSpace not only contains all possible thought, vision, and experience. It may also contain all manifestations of physical matter. My perception while in CydelikSpace is that all matter, all energy, all movement, is still contained in a dimensionless point. The “Big Bang” and the unfolding of the universe has not yet occurred. CydelikSpace is a seething mass of unlimited possibilities contained within a nucleus. While in CydelikSpace the manifest universe that I appear to wake up to each morning is no more real or solid than countless other universes.

In a 1989 *High Times* article, Ramses Sputz describes his Ketamine experience; “I become a floating diffuse cloud of disembodied thought, surfing the warps and waves of Einstein’s non-linear, non-Euclidean space-time continuum. I’m on a guided tour through the subatomic factory which continuously generates the universe, witnessing the mathematical equations which govern the emergence of matter from the field of quantum probabilities, the vacuum matrix from which all particles arise and into which they dissolve. But the factory doesn’t manufacture this universe alone. Countless other universes are rolling off the assembly line, and I can see their images peeping around the corners of space-time.”

As a physicist can explain, what feels like a piece of solid steel, is not actually solid at all. It is composed of 99.9999 . . . % empty space, with some minute subatomic particles swirling about at incredible velocities. So in CydelikSpace, the existence of self and the universe is experienced as switching on and off and through a myriad manifestations each fraction of a millisecond.

Most any psychedelic can, on auspicious occasions, bring one deeply into CydelikSpace. The LSD experience I had in Death Valley shows one possible experience of CydelikSpace. In my mind’s eye I beheld all of the changes that the landscape around me had passed through over millions of years. I experienced the lives and witnessed the perspectives of each life form that had lived on these grounds.

The experience of Enlightenment, Satori, or Samadhi, as it is called in various Eastern religions, is another variation of Cydelikspace. I have had this experience of Samadhi. The extinguishing of self-awareness and the dawning of omniscient awareness was simultaneous. It was as though someone had switched on all the interior lights of my mind, and this light passed through me like a bolt of lightning. Everything was understood and made clear. It seemed quite obvious that the entire manifest universe, along with my identity and experience of life, was all a creation of Consciousness.

The experience sought by many practicing Eastern religions closely resembles CydelikSpace. However, those who have apparently attained this “Enlightenment” have expressed only a partial understanding of CydelikSpace. They seldom describe vast and detailed perceptions, such as the infinite variety of life forms that have existed throughout time and space, and in the non-manifest realms. Although the states of mind these people experience may be vast, they do not seem to be without limitations. Rarely are “Enlightened” persons even aware of the thoughts in others’ minds.

I’ll even hazard to suggest that complete cognizance of CydelikSpace is not possible

for any individual or entity. There appears to be a paradox in that to comprehend CydelikSpace in full one must shrink to a point of zero, at which stage there would be no experience or perception. To function as a human, and comprehend all of CydelikSpace, is not possible. This is not to say that one can't have some extremely grandiose experiences in this arena. But I don't believe one can ever reach a final stage of Enlightenment, attainment of a state from which they have nothing further to learn, nowhere further to go.

Many mystical religions preach pursuit of this Satori experience at the expense of not valuing one's personal identity or ego. These philosophies tend to degrade the development of personality, character, abilities, relations, even evolution itself. While the ego or identity certainly needs to be transcended to enter CydelikSpace, it is only by continually rebuilding our identity that our lives continue. My philosophy has been to use the psychedelic, spiritual, ego-loss experience to break down my limitations and definitions of myself, to keep my identity from stagnating, then to rebuild and develop in the manner I choose, a wiser, healthier, happier ego.

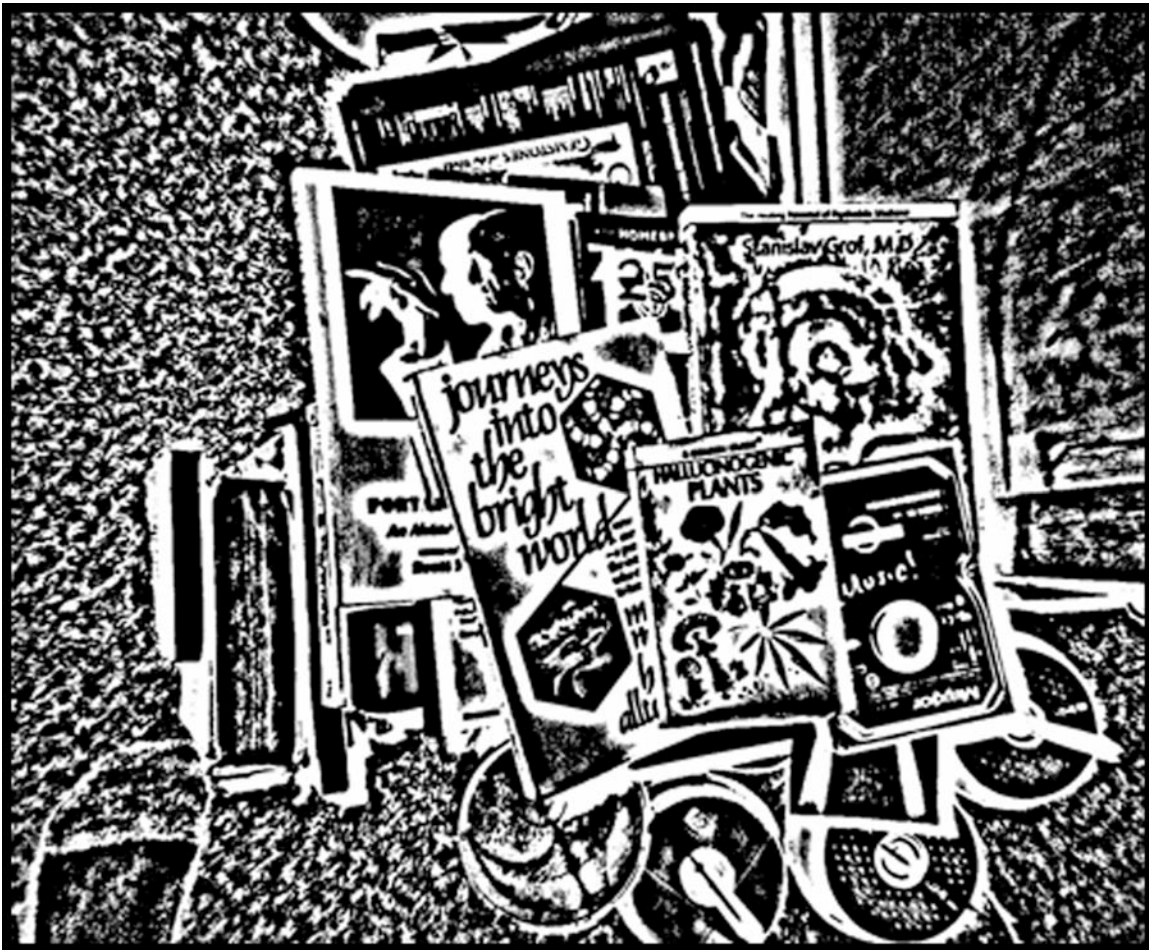
Indeed it is this loss of ego, identity, or self-awareness which admits one into CydelikSpace. And since any psychedelic can dissolve the identity to a degree, any psychedelic can admit one into CydelikSpace. However, with most psychedelic experiences the tendency is for the ego to begin to reinstate itself immediately after it has dissolved. While the experience of CydelikSpace seems timeless while in it, if timed on a clock the deep portion of the experience usually lasts but a few seconds.

My LSD experience in Death Valley is a case in point. At first my self-identity was dissolving slowly. The pace increased until the ego was in a rapidly deteriorating state. The "peak" during which "I became the One Mind onto which all the experiences of time have been etched," lasted for but a brief moment by our earthly clocks. The descent back to self-awareness was equally sharp, as I saw layers of identity forming in front of my perception. If viewed across a graph chart, the egoloss/reinstatement process would start as a slowly rising curve, changing to a nearly vertical, quickly-rising line as the ego dissolves to near nothingness. The reinstatement of the ego usually closely mirrors its dissolution.

In 1953, after ingesting mescaline for his first psychedelic experience, the famous author-philosopher Aldous Huxley wrote *The Doors of Perception*. Here Huxley discusses ideas of his own, and of other philosophers, relating to this theme. "The function of the brain, nervous system, and sense organs is in the main *eliminative* and not productive. Each person is at any moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful.

"According to such a theory, each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But in so far as we are animals, our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us stay alive on the surface of this particular planet.

“The various ‘other worlds’ with which human beings erratically make contact are so many elements in the totality of the awareness belonging to Mind at Large. Most people, most of the time, know only what comes through the reducing valve and is consecrated as genuinely real by the local language. Certain persons, however, seem to be born with a kind of by-pass that circumvents the reducing valve. In others temporary by-passes may be acquired either spontaneously, or as the result of deliberate ‘spiritual exercises’, or through hypnosis, or by means of drugs. Through these by-passes there flows, not indeed the perception ‘of everything that is happening everywhere in the universe’ (for the by-pass does not abolish the reducing valve, which still excludes the total content of Mind at Large) but something more than, and above all something different from, the carefully selected utilitarian material which our narrowed, individual minds regard as a complete, or at least a sufficient, picture of reality.”



MP: VV

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007. Reading Ric's poems is like being lifted suddenly into a yearless world in which men & nature suffer & joy more closely together, & yield great fruit thusly.

Nemo Boko lives in Portland, Oregon. His artwork last appeared in *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. I call him dear friend even as we differ on Art's role in the marketplace. I believe we synch entirely within Art itself.

Emmanuelle Page lives in Portland, Oregon. Her art last appeared in *Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006. Still a mysterious person to me, I found a way to know her better though the **Manifest Project** pictures she took.

Joe Ciccone lives in Boston, Massachusetts, or at least is in the process of moving back there. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. I await seeing him in person this year & knowing better his relation with the strange years since last we met.

G.C. Dillon lives in Plainville, Connecticut. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. I am happy for his renewed spirit, and vow to live a long, long life. I look forward to publishing many more fictions by him.

Ralph H. Emerson lives in South Glastonbury, Connecticut. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 46 | June 2001. Seven years since last we talked & worked together & yet here we are, again talking & working together.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born in 1927 in the town of Aracataca, Columbia. He is considered, rightly, one of the greatest modern fiction writers. The reprinted story of his in this issue will also appear in a Scriptor Press Burning Man Books 2008 short anthology of his fictions.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. I find in her a friend's strength to turn to, a warmth to comfort & learn by.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Portland, Oregon. There are no words that sum up & completely who & what she is, or what she is to me. Adoration, laughter, toughness to make it, & make it good.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Portland, Oregon. I was laid off from my job hardly a day ago. Making this issue took my all yet I gave to it & will continue to, **corporate bastards be damned.**

D.M. Turner was born in 1962 and died in 1996. He is best known for his excellent volume *The Essential Psychedelic Guide*, from which the writing in this issue is excerpted. This piece will also be reprinted in a Scriptor Press Burning Man Books 2008 anthology of writings on psychedelics.

Victor Vaneck lives in The Dalles, Oregon. His art is new to these pages, and very welcomed. A keen, bright, deeply feeling eye & heart for this world.

Michael Van Kleeck lives in Portland, Oregon. His writing last appeared in *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. I saw him preach poems to the Portland streets not long ago; amid curses & cheers & fireworks, he smiled & sang on.



manifest better . . .

MP: KS

